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Originally posted: March 29, 2006

## Memo to French: No more job security

I wanted to take a moment to comment on the youth rioting currently taking place in France.

My only words of advice to the young students demonstrating and rioting throughout Paris are, "Get over it. Job security no longer exists."

As a 30-something Chicagoan and business owner, who has been living and working in France for the last three years, I can say this with utter confidence. I come from that first generation of new workers in America, who graduated from college during the early '90s when our country was in a serious economic recession. There were no jobs for anyone, let alone recent graduates. Imagine our frustration when so many of us had worked our way through college, paying expensive tuition, only to discover that temporary positions or low-paying jobs at coffee shops and Kinko's were the only jobs awaiting us. Many of my friends returned to school to attain master's degrees. I myself spent the first two years out of college working unpaid internships. Actually to me, that's exactly what the first job contract would be for young people in France except better—at least they would be "paid" internships.

From a business perspective, it would make it easier for companies like mine to hire more workers. Right now all my help comes from the United States because I was warned upon entering France that it would be extremely difficult to remove unsuccessful employees. Not having that flexibility really slows growth.

Despite French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin's motives, what he is initiating will actually help not hurt France. The world markets are changing rapidly. France needs employment flexibility. Without it France, Italy and Spain—all countries within the European Union with some of the highest unemployment rates among youth—would not be able to compete in the global marketplace. To be really successful, however, France must reform all work policies—not just a few here and there.

The youths are trying to hold on to the past, and they want to have their cake and eat it too. If France doesn't move with the times by reforming antiquated employment and work policies, however, it will end up taking part in that race to the bottom.

At end of the day, my generation learned that we're the only ones who can secure our future. That would be a good lesson for French students to start learning today.

*Carolyn Davenport-Moncel*

*Courbevoie, France*

## Comments

I wonder if anybody in the French media has pointed out that labor markets in Scandinavia are actually more flexible without loss personal protections by the government, outside of your employers benefits.

And JD, it isn't just Socialists ... Pat Buchanan, Lou Dobbs and others on the 19th Century Right also tout union-style benefits and policies for all, which they feel have been demolished by the global free market. They'll criticise the French (who lost a Marine in Operation Enduring Freedom two weeks ago in Afghanistan; everybody's onside except in Iraq) but turn around and support the same thing!

Posted by: [Goauld](#) | Mar 29, 2006 3:08:29 PM

## Contact info

To submit a letter to the editor at the Chicago Tribune, send [e-mail](#) or fax to 312-222-2598 or write to Voice of the People, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611.

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