tance caller identified herself as representing a national opinion poll. Would I mind answering some questions? No, I replied, but first I had a few questions of my own.

What organization was paying for the poll? She didn't know; she was hired to ask the questions.

How was my name chosen? It was not chosen. My telephone number

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was selected randomly.

She wanted to know my age, marital status, salary, level of education, political party affiliation. For the next 20 minutes we discussed the deficit, the environment, crime, the savings and loan crisis and abortion. Which party, the Democrats or the Republicans, was better prepared to solve the various crises that the country is facing? I said neither.

Of all her questions, the first one sticks in my mind. Was I satisfied with the direction in which the country was going? No, I told her, I was not. And it's not because I am a registered Democrat who is miffed that his party is out of power.

What disturbs me is that so many citizens do not bother to vote and that powerful special-interest groups and political action committees (PACs) are corrupting the political process and determining the country's direction.

There was a time when Americans could depend upon a strong two-party system to protect our interests. But who was there to protect us in the current savings and loan scandal? Not the Republicans and not the Democrats.

And not the press. In a recent New York Times article, Ellen Hume shows that the press blew the story about the savings and loan scandal. She writes: "If the press had seen and reported earlier the

savings and loan industry's eight-year suicidal spree, the subsequent political pressure might have saved taxpayers tens or even hundreds of billions of dollars. . . ."

In the light of news that the S&L bailout is going to cost every man, woman and child living in America $2,000 apiece, how can anyone be happy with the direction this country is taking?

Shortly after my conversation with that pollster, David Hydock, my 20-year-old nephew, who just finished his sophomore year at John Carroll University, came to our apartment to do some odd jobs. My wife and I had some long discussions with him about his future. He's an excellent student who loves British literature and would like to study for a semester or two in the British Isles. He writes essays and poetry. He's also interested in political science and follows current events.

But he's not an egghead. He played on the freshman and junior varsity football team at Carroll, has his own rock band and writes lyrics for songs he composes. He likes the university but wonders why it does not do more to recruit minorities.

He's at the crossroads right now, trying to make a decision about what his major will be.

If he were to ask my advice, the cynical side of me would tell him to forget about going to England, Scotland and Ireland to study Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Burns, Joyce and Yeats. Cynically, I would advise him not go into politics because that's a dirty business. Politicians are a greedy, grabby bunch who should be avoided like the plague. Rather, David, get yourself a degree in business. Study like hell and get a high grade point average. Graduate near the top of your class so you can get into a prestigious graduate school. Your goal in life should be to make a ton of money before you are 30.

For you, Dave, a career in business is the quickest way to get a