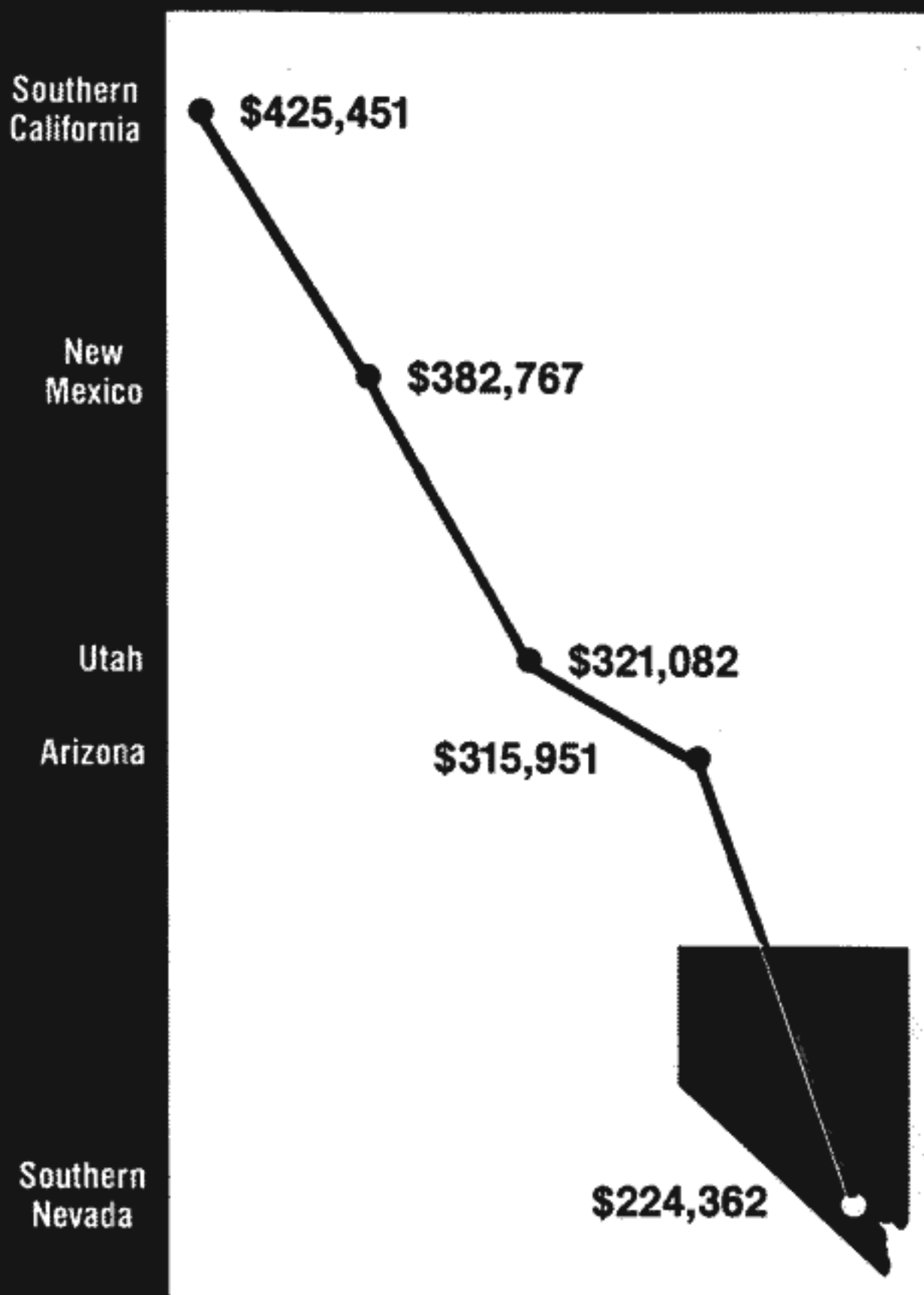


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DEFENSE

defense industry? Critics think that the latter is a real possibility, even though they have a difficult time pinning down substantial evidence.

On the other hand, are these companies simply taking out very expensive insurance against possible charges of discriminatory hiring practices? Defense contractors are required by the Pentagon to provide equal employment opportunities. By putting the phrase "equal opportunity employer" at the bottom of each ad, the companies might be trying to demonstrate that they are conforming to affirmative action guidelines. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance makes it clear that this would not be much of a defense if a company's work force did not mirror the labor pool. However, it is one way for companies to document that they are offering jobs to minority applicants throughout the community.

Of course, this question assumes that the openings actually exist. Joe Rigo, creative director at the Austin Knight recruitment advertising agency, says, "There are many times when a client has no real need for any employees but they just want to keep their name out there."

Citing the public relations benefit of these large recruitment ads, Imazeki says, "We try to convey a sense of our company. It helps build our company image."

This naturally leads to the question of whether taxpayers—who spend \$300 billion annually to keep the defense contractors in business—should be footing the bill for recruitment advertising that is actually image advertising. Unlike the image advertising these companies run in publications such as the *Atlantic* and *Newsweek*, classified ads convey an added message: Not only are defense and aerospace companies good, they are also contributing to a healthy economy with lots of jobs for everybody.

These ads are also skewing the data for economic research firms such as the Conference Board of New York. This organization relies on calculations of total employee help-wanted ad lineage to provide an indication of the health of various local economies. By counting image-building ads placed by defense contractors, the researchers may conclude that certain economies are healthier than they actually are.

Then again, Ronald Reagan never seems to let facts get in the way of a good photo opportunity.

Hal Plotkin is a free-lance writer in La Honda, California.