

# Profiles of Excellence . . . President of Notre Dame calls for world education

By Colleen Kenney  
Staff Reporter

One night in the late 1960s, the president of the University of Notre Dame, didn't get to sleep. If he had, he says, he might have been out of a job.

That night Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame since 1952, received word that Notre Dame students planned to take over the Campus ROTC building to protest the Vietnam War. Hesburgh also learned that students planned a rally for the next day. Thus, he could plan his words and actions for that night and the following day.

"Instead of being run out of town in the 60s, I was leading the revolution," Hesburgh said.

The ROTC building was not burned down, as had been predicted. Hesburgh now is in his 33rd year at Notre Dame — the longest tenure of any U.S. college president.

"Young people will do what they're challenged to do," he said at a press conference on the UNL campus Thursday. "If you expect them to burn down a building, they will."

Hesburgh was in Lincoln as the featured speaker of "Profiles of Excellence," a dinner that honored 63 University Endowed and Regents professors from UNL, UNO, and the NU-Medical Center in Omaha.

"Excellence does not come easy. If you want good educators, you have to pay them," Hesburgh said in his speech. Endowed professors attract good scholars, he said.

NU President Ronald Roskens introduced Hesburgh at the banquet as "a champion of human virtues."

However, Hesburgh said, university systems sometimes forget moral growth

in the pursuit of purely intellectual growth.

"We are unworthy of this country's unique blessing if we can't show students the real picture of the world," Hesburgh said. "We need to incorporate in education service to mankind."

Hesburgh has served every U.S. president since Eisenhower. He was the chairman of the Civil Rights Commission under former President Richard Nixon, and currently monitors El Salvadoran elections for President Ronald Reagan.

He received the nation's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom, in 1964. His 100 honorary degrees have placed him in the "Guinness Book of World Records."

He has been a friend and teacher of world leaders.

"But my world is almost over. It's up to the young people now," he said.

In his three decades at Notre Dame, Hesburgh has noticed three generations of students: the serious, post-war students; the protesting students of the 1960s; and the present college students, who are not materialistic or apathetic to social issues, as most people believe.

The young are no less idealistic than in the past, but they're being pressured to succeed under conservative indictment, Hesburgh said.

The Vietnam draft threat and the issues of the war were real to the college students of the late 1960s and early 1970s, he said. But because the nuclear threat is "too overwhelming sometimes," students now have distanced themselves more, he said.

Hesburgh challenged students and teachers to achieve an excellence in academics that can be transmitted to

international concern. Students need to give rather than grab selfishly, he said.

Like he did that night in the 1960s at Notre Dame, Hesburgh asked students and teachers to plan for the future of education and the world.

"What is competence worth if we don't have compassion?" he said.

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