

(Remarks of Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.,
President, University of Notre Dame, at the
Testimonial Dinner honoring Dr. John A. Hannah,
President, Michigan State University, East Lansing,
November 18, 1966)

About nine years ago, I stood in the White House with your distinguished President, Dr. John Hannah, and took the oath of office as a member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, under his Chairmanship. Of the six Commissioners present that day, only Dr. Hannah and I remain on the Commission today, and my presence is due to him. Every time I tried to quit, he said we must quit together, but he never does. President Kennedy at first thought that, under his administration, the Commission should have a Democratic Chairman. He was soon persuaded that, Republican or not, John Hannah was the best man for the job, so he asked him to stay. So did President Johnson.

I have watched John Hannah operate in these nine difficult years at this most difficult task. The qualities that shine through him are courage, wisdom, firmness, understanding, and especially leadership. He always knows when to speak and when to listen, when to bend and when to stand firm, when to conciliate and when to lead, whether in Birmingham, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Boston, Newark, Cleveland, or, most especially, in Washington.

During six of these years, he also found time to serve, also as Chairman, on the United States section of the permanent Joint Board on the Defense of

Canada and the United States, often traveling to the Arctic Circle to survey the almost impossible construction of the DEW line, our then electronic first line of defense. He meanwhile helped reconstruct the University of the Philippines, the University of the Ryukyus, and established the first land-grant type university in Africa, at Nsukka in Nigeria. I have stood in each of these places and have seen the fruits of his worldwide labors, and how he is revered there. Worldwide development, through higher education, through agriculture, business administration, and engineering, is not to him an idea. It is a living reality that he has helped create in many universities of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

He also found time during these years to serve as a delegate to Michigan's Constitutional Convention, as he had found time previously to serve as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Personnel, when he spent the long tiring weeks in Washington and the impossibly busy weekends in East Lansing on University affairs. I once tried this on a United Nations assignment in New York for eight weeks and it darn near killed me. John did it for eighteen months.

These are only the bare bones of John Hannah's service to his community,

his state, his nation, and all the world. But how can one encompass in five minutes the totality of 25 years of generous service?

John Hannah is a man for all seasons, in fact he works in and out of season for peace and for defense of all that is good, for Civil Rights, and for equality of opportunity in education, voting, employment, housing, public accommodations, and the Administration of Justice, for development and hope in countries and among people long without both, for a better world, a better country, a better state, and here in East Lansing for a better University that has amazed everyone by the rapidity of its growth, the sweep of its excellence, the multiplicity of its concerns that mirror his, and a football team that we will try very hard to worry more tomorrow than we have in ten of the last eleven years.

On behalf of the millions of people whose lives he has enriched, I salute John Hannah. More than that, in the highest form of praise, I try in many ways to imitate him and to follow his star which sheds a brilliant light for all of us who are proud to call him our friend.