

IS MORE HIGHER EDUCATION BETTER?

One cannot answer this question for everyone, except to say that no one is completely educated until the end of one's life. Presumably, higher education in this sense is education beyond that which one presently has acquired. We all learn every day if we read good books, if our inner eyes and ears are open to learn from all the experiences of every day, from the people we meet and work with, from the experiences that illuminate and give meaning to our lives.

Obviously though, the question has to do with formal education as received in the colleges and universities in our land. Presumably, one should simply say that it would be better if everyone went to a college or university. The assumption is that we would all be better off if we had advanced degrees, not only baccalaureates, but masters and doctorates.

I, for one, would not make such a statement, although I have spent my whole life, after the age of seventeen, in universities. What I would assert is that there are people in colleges and universities today who are not really gaining by this process of education, either because they are there for the wrong reasons or are not really committed to learn all that is available from the university experience. On the other hand, there are many intelligent and better motivated individuals who for social and economic reasons have no opportunity for higher education in the formal sense. The Carnegie Commission revealed several years ago that those in the higher economic and social classes had seven times the chance of attending colleges and universities than

those born in the lower social and economic quartile, ^{these latter} these latter were more intelligent and more motivated. Obviously, for a nation of limited higher intelligence groups -- as all nations are so limited -- this is wrong. Talent is where one finds it, and we can say for every nation that those of highest talent and motivation should have the best opportunity for higher education -- but they do not and this is wrong. Why? Because our country needs all the educated talent it can muster and, for this group, one can easily say that more higher education is obviously better.

When instead of these highly talented and motivated students, those less intelligent and less motivated receive a higher education -- even if they resist it and, in fact, get little -- just because by accident of birth their parents can pay for it, then our country is going to pay the price of losing and frustrating the limited talent that we have.

What do we do about this? At my university, about 60% of our students -- all highly intelligent and most well motivated -- are on scholarships that assist them in receiving that higher education that will qualify them for leadership and high professional performance and better human beings. In the present financial crunch, there is always the temptation to cut this scholarship assistance first. We can always replace these deserving and talented -- though needy -- students with those less talented whose parents can pay. Thus far, we have resisted the temptation in the belief that to do less would

somehow invalidate all our efforts to provide a great measure of higher education to those students who competitively demonstrate that they will profit most from the experience at Notre Dame. For them, more higher education is surely better. For those who would not profit from it and would not serve better because of it, I doubt strongly that more higher education is better.

It is a wonderful fact that a secretary without higher education, who invested her meager funds wisely, and let them grow, left our university at her death almost ten million dollars to provide the opportunity that she lacked for poor students, men and women, who hungered for more higher education. When one responds to intellectual and moral hunger, more higher education is always better.

(Rev.) Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.
President, University of Notre Dame

November 14, 1975

Mr. Crocker Snow
The Boston Globe
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Snow:

I am sending you the article on "Is
More Higher Education Better?" I hope it
fills the bill.

All best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

(Rev.) Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.
President

cc: Mr. Hellmuth
Mr. Conklin

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