

(Statement by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Junior Achievement National Business Leadership Conference, Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D. C., February 4, 1977)

"Who Runs America..Who Should?"

As an educator, I would like to take the second part of the question, since the answer to the first part is factual -- who runs America, whereas the answer to the second part -- who should -- is normative, a moral imperative, not necessarily a fact, but at least an ideal. Educators should push ideals, I believe.

The Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, who first wrote on political organization, said it as well as anyone since. There are three possibilities for running any society and each of the three has a good and a bad form. First, a society can be run by one person. In its good form, we have called it monarchy, and in its bad form, dictatorship. However, to complicate the matter further, there have been bad monarchs and benign dictators. The second form of governance is rule by the few. In its good form, we call it oligarchy, an elite class rule; in its bad form today, we call it a junta, usually made up of Generals. Again, there have been bad oligarchies and fairly progressive juntas. The third possible form of governance is rule by the many. We call the good form of this democracy (from the Greek word demos for people.) The bad form is anarchy, or mob rule. There

have been sloppy and ineffectual democracies, but I have never heard of a good mob rule, a decent kind of anarchy.

That gives us six possibilities for running a country, five of which conceivably can be good. Since our stated form of government is the third type, democracy or a democratic republic if you will, we presumably are run by the many or as Lincoln best put it: We are a government of the people, for the people, by the people. Politicians (not necessarily a bad word) who deeply believe this are called populists, again from the Latin word populus, meaning the people.

If you have followed me thus far, the fact ought to be that we, the people, (that's the way our Constitution starts) should run the country, even though, in fact, we elect many other people on every level of government to run, day by day, for us. That doesn't keep us from seeing, day by day, that it is being run well by them and replacing them if they are not.

One final thought -- this is official governance, by President, Governors, Mayors, legislators, etc. In America, as I am sure will emerge from the discussion, about half the work of running the country is done unofficially by a wide variety of voluntary groups, from scout masters to visiting nurses, to Red Cross and even university presidents.