

February 20, 1970

Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C.
President
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Dear Father Hesburgh:

For some time now I have been considering the letter which you sent out to all employees of the University concerning the equal employment opportunity policy of the University. I hesitate to criticize something of this nature, the spirit of which one has to agree with somehow. I also hesitate to criticize it because I assume extensive thought has gone into its composition. However, I find that I must make a few comments on it. Your letter referred to above and the material sent out to all Department Chairmen and Supervisors under Joseph F. O'Brien's signature on the 28th of January seemed to me to establish a policy which, if implemented honestly, will have the inevitable effect of turning this University from its present Catholic axis and orientation to an axis and orientation which will be, in fact, indistinguishable from that which govern the state universities. Now admittedly this may take some time; and it is, of course, possible by means of skulduggery to avoid the implications of the equal employment opportunity policy. I assume, however, that the dishonesty involved in violating in practice what is preached in theory is not to be tolerated in this day and age of honesty and candor.

Perhaps I am wrong in my misgivings. I, at the present time, sincerely hope so. However, if applicants, for example, for academic positions at this University are considered only on the basis of academic qualifications it seems to me simply a matter of time until the majority of faculty members here will not be Catholic. This seems simply a matter of statistics and not a question of Catholics being of an inferior quality in their intellectual achievements. And if this does come about, if the majority of the faculty at this University come to be non-Catholic, then indeed the time will have come at which there will be no answer to the question as to how we differ from a secular institution. And I presume that at such a point this institution should apply for a state-related status.

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I write this as a concerned Catholic intellectual (of sorts) and out of the conviction that belief determines a vast number of positions that an individual will take in the physical sciences, social sciences and humanities. If this is not the case: If the pursuit that we are involved in is not somehow related to Anselm's adage about Fides Quærens Intellectum, if our intellectual quest is not somehow related to this adage of Anselm's, then for me at least the intellectual life becomes far more trivial than I ever conceived. It becomes simply a process of running some intellectual signal off a flagpole and seeing who salutes it. And I would indeed rather dig ditches than play such silly games.

I trust that you understand that this letter has been written out of a concern for the University and the intellectual life and that I bear no ill-will on this score toward you or any others who may have formulated the policy in question. I would gratefully appreciate it if somehow or another you could find time, from what I know is an overwhelming schedule, to reply in some form or another to this letter.

Thanking you very much for your consideration, I remain

Sincerely yours,

John Lyon
Assistant Professor

JL:mlm

COPY

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Office of the President

March 12, 1970

Cash Address "Bulac"

Professor John Lyon
The General Program
Notre Dame, Indiana

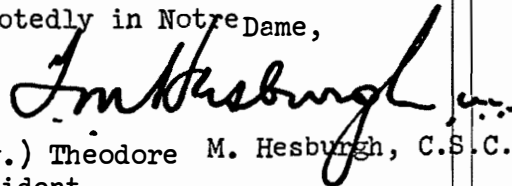
Dear Professor Lyon:

Many thanks for your recent letter. I share your concern, but, as so often happens in modern life, we are walking a razor edge between what seem to be conflicting values. The University must be a completely open society in every aspect, while, at the same time, we must try to promote, continue, and deepen the values which gave this place birth as a particularly kind of university. I believe there are sufficient Catholic intellectuals around to attract them to Notre Dame. If the place does seem to stand for something corporately and throughout its membership, then indeed they will be attracted here. This requires constant and, at times, subtle effort on the part of Academic Vice Presidents, Deans, and Department Heads. However, they do know how I feel about the matter.

You raise an important issue and it is on my mind and I'm doing what I can about it. Perhaps at times it should be discussed more openly and made a matter of more common concern. It certainly is not something that one person can guide by himself.

All best wishes and prayers.

Devotedly in Notre Dame,



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