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REMARKS

CATHOLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION DINNER

October 20, 1968

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No longer do we need to advise high school seniors to go to college. That story has been well told many times and generally accepted. Actually, however, only about half of graduating seniors go on to college from high school. A slight concern is developing now among educators because more students than might be expected choose to delay college in order to work for a time and thereby run the risk of not going at all. These students are in the middle range of scholastic abilities, quite able to go to college and benefit from it; but the job market is such, particularly in this region, that the temptation to work is quite strong. Industry needs these people and compete with colleges for their time. Of course industry will need the college graduate more later; both industry and students are trading off long-range advantages for short-range gains. For the upper level of students, such as you are, the comparison of advantages is obvious enough to make it no contest--you are going to college; but for friends of yours who are tempted by a well-paying job, tell them to talk it over with a good college advisor before choosing to delay their university education.

For you, the question is where you will go to college--and, more basically, what is a college all about?

Let me dispose of the economic aspect first. College is worth the cost, including foregone wages, many times over. Later on, you will not be particularly aware of this advantage; you will simply

live at a different level and feel just as panicked as anyone about the cost of living. But it will make a difference--statistics prove this point. What about the difference between going to a really good university and an ordinary one? What about the difference between a private school and a state school? The difference in cost might be as much as \$4,500 in four years--a sizeable debt to start out with, if you have taken it all in loans. Do you ever recover that amount? In all probability, yes; the figures are a little ambiguous; because a person who goes through a good school is more likely to be less concerned about money than one who goes through a state school. He is more likely to be altruistic--to end up as a college professor, say--not a badly paying job now, but one probably less remunerative than a person of high ability could command. On the other hand, he is more likely to finish college--the person who attends a private school--to actually get a degree, and much more likely to go on to graduate school. It might be worth remarking that only 9% of the population over 25 has a bachelor's degree; and even now, only 15% of each year's college-age group attains a B.A.--it's still a rare thing. But at one of the high-ranking academic schools--and the choice schools are, across the country, small, privately operated colleges--a higher percentage of its entering students go through to a degree.

Let me explore this last point a bit. The select schools choose people whom they expect to complete their degrees. This is the real principle of selection for a college; it is not just intelli-

gence or grades or college board scores that are considered in the choosing of students for admission. Persistence, balance, a sense of humor--the indefinable qualities adding up to character--these are all evaluated. And once a student is selected, every effort is made to see that he stays in college. He is counselled, tutored, helped over the rough spots; a private college has an investment in every student: tuition pays only 55% of instructional costs, as it does in other private institutions. Consequently, the good schools protect their investment: if they have spent time on students, they want to see them achieve their degrees. More than half the students who enroll at these schools finish through to degrees. At the University of Dallas now the figure is about 60%; and we have introduced a study to make it even higher. (At state schools, of course, much of the selection has to occur after admission; consequently, the university does not devote much of its energies to retention.)

The investment which you make in a good school is worth it financially. But I would not sell our kind of education on the basis of economics. It's nice to know that you won't lose on it in the long run; but the principal investment which you have to make is your life: and you have only one. What you need to know is the difference that will be made to that life by an education at a select school.

The ingredients of a good undergraduate college are: a high-quality student body, an excellent faculty, and a well-designed cur-

riculum. The student body here, for example, was rated recently by the American Testing Service as in the upper 7% of the nation. With such a student body, the courses are taught at a high, more interesting level. One of the characteristics of a good school is that the students learn from each other as well as from their professors. Not only do they study together, but their outside discussions broaden their learning tremendously. Then, too, the students know that their fellows are ones who will be leaders in society--ones who will occupy positions of importance, as much as anything it is this sense of importance on the campus that makes a good school. That sense is present on only a few campuses. It is here on this one.

A good faculty is absolutely essential. How do you recognize one? Partly by statistics. The number of doctorates and other degrees, the schools from which these degrees are earned, the publications of the faculty--all these enter in. A good faculty is made up of authorities in their disciplines. When they teach, they are not talking about what other people know; they are, themselves, professors in their fields--they profess their disciplines. And they have to want to teach if they are to be good teachers; they have to be impelled with love and enthusiasm to share their insights, and to lead others to see the beauty of their subjects. Not many faculties combine these traits. On this campus is one of the great ones. "A distinguished faculty," the accrediting committee of the Southern Association called it some years ago. It has continued to

grow and has been one of the assets that cause us to be rated 8th among Catholic schools. A good student deserves to spend his college years in the presence and under the tutelage of great professors.

The other ingredient is the curriculum. And here the University of Dallas has blazed the trail. The college experience is only incidentally the acquisition of skills or of information. The skills and the facts must be there, but true learning occurs in the imagination and in the character of the student. Every course, the sequence of courses, and the inter-relation of the courses all must operate to expand the student, to make him a larger, more magnanimous, more noble person. It is this goal that this University pursues in developing its rather theory of education, which is admired and, to some degree, imitated in other colleges and universities. The curriculum, more than any aspect of the school, has caused the scholarship committees such as the Woodrow Wilson and the Fulbright Fellowships to give exceptional attention to the graduates of the University of Dallas. In this state only Rice, the University of Dallas, and the large University of Texas at Austin have consistently had winners of these scholarships over a period of several years.

But it is what an education does for the student, not what it wins for him, that is our concern. The kind of education which we have here--a strong emphasis on the liberal arts on the undergraduate level--is the kind that I want my son to have. I suspect that it is the kind your parents would want for you. I know that it is the kind

of education which you are seeking, because I see it at work on students just like you. We have called it a liberal education--an education in those great ideas, insights, concepts that make up the basic disciplines of the mind, without which the mind is hampered, to some degree, no matter how much special information it may have. Whether you will be a physicist, chemist, mathematician, engineer, doctor, lawyer, professor, writer, artist, business executive--whatever profession you choose, you deserve the liberal arts undergraduate experience at a college that has a structured curriculum--where you will be guided to study in a curriculum that has meaning.

Therefore, choose well. Talk to the professors here tonight. Visit with others. Ask about the computer, about writing, about art, or drama. Next to marriage, the choice of a college is the most important choice which you will make in your life. And remember, you have only one life. Don't waste it.