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# Ex-Rights Head Vents Ire at Nixon

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By Marjorie Hyer  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, who last month was dusted as chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, said in an interview that President Nixon has spent no more than 15 minutes with the commission in the last four years.

The Notre Dame University president made that assertion in an interview published in the National Catholic Reporter, a lay-edited weekly published in Kansas City.

Father Hesburgh told Catholic Reporter correspondents Joel R. Connelly and Howard J. Dooley, who have co-authored a book about Notre Dame under Father Hesburgh's administration, that he was "not disillusioned" by the request for his resignation—the first dismissal of the Nixon administration in its post-election reorganization.

## Upsetting Statement

"The one thing that upsets me is that they said I was going to resign anyway rather than serve if Nixon was re-elected," he said.

"Ziegler claimed I said that before the election but I made no such statement. You'd think that after 15 years of service on the commission, they could at least not distort the terms of my departure," he was quoted as saying.

In their report of the interview, Connelly and Dooley said Father Hesburgh's dismissal "represents his termination of his longstanding friendship with President Nixon.

"Gone from his conversation are the references to 'my good friend Dick Nixon,' which Hesburgh once made in talking with Notre Dame Students," the authors observed.

"Gone are references to Hesburgh's own influence be-

hind the scenes and his homilies on the necessity of tempering one's own rhetoric on issues in order to gain a hearing at the White House.

"Hesburgh lectured his students on these subjects in past years," they continued. "He has since told them, 'We are being governed by mental midgets.'"

According to the Catholic Reporter article, Father Hes-

burgh "continues to defend the motives and good intentions of the President" but is sharply critical of White House aides.

The priest-educator is quoted as saying about presidential aides H.R. Haldeman and John Erlichman: "They're good men, both of them, but sometimes I wonder if some spirit of adventure is lacking in them. The people around Nixon, like Haldeman and Erlichman, are not really exciting.

"Take how these two guys spend their off hours. They get together with their families and watch home movies they've taken of Nixon campaigning.

"Now I can think of better ways to spend my spare time," Father Hesburgh said.

In the interview, Connelly and Dooley said, Father Hesburgh was "reluctant to talk about his personal relations with the President" but the writers said he "cited his election-year criticism of Nixon administration civil rights policies when asked to explain his ouster."

Connelly and Dooley asserted that the priest "broke with the President on the same issue of school desegregation as long ago as September, 1969," and "publicly criticized the Department of Justice for its alleged refusal to enforce existing civil rights statutes."

They said Father Hesburgh in 1970 broke with the administration's policies on Indochina.

## Lecture Recalled

"He called for immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam and personally lectured Nixon on the depths of campus outrage in the wake of the killings at Kent State," they wrote.

Father Hesburgh told the Catholic Reporter correspondents that he had turned down "more than 40" interview requests after his dismissal because "I think it's best to leave with a little grace."

In Roman Catholic circles there have been rumors that Father Hesburgh is among those whom the Vatican is considering to succeed Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, archbishop of Washington, who tendered his resignation more than a year ago on reaching the age of 75.