

March 17, 1975

POOL REPORT NO. 3

From the conclusion of the speech to the end of the Academic Reception:

The President and Father Hesburgh left the stage and entered a small holding room just outside the basketball court where they shed their academic robes. After about five minutes the two men emerged and walked down a hallway joking and laughing but the pool could not hear what they were saying. The President was wearing a wilted shamrock sprig which he later indicated had been given to him by the Irish Ambassador and he subsequently joked that it was probably transported illegally into the country.

Before entering the academic reception, the President and Father Hesburgh went into another holding room where they remained ten or fifteen minutes before entering the reception at which 80 to 100 students and faculty were present. Father Hesburgh introduced President Ford saying, "He wants to shake all of your hands," and the President appeared to do his best to live up to that promise. At the outset, the President said, "I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with a governing body that is so broad based. I am sure they are more understanding and cooperative than the Congress in most respects."

The President then started shaking hands with students and faculty alike. Father Hesburgh singled out a few faculty members. At one point Ed Byrne incoming President of the Notre Dame Student Body presented Mr. Ford with a green and yellow sweater shirt that was a gift from the Notre Dame ski team (Byrne was asked if he was the student body president who reportedly was to have walked out on the President's speech, and he said "No that was the outgoing Student Body President, and that at the end neither of them walked out.")

At one point, Dr. Peter Walshe of the Note Dame University Government Department appeared to capture the President's ear and held a conversation in low and muted tones. Afterward, Dr. Walshe explained to reporters that he was expressing deep concern over what happened and explaining to the President why some of the students walked out. Walshe said, "this student body represents the finest flower of Christian conscience and we considered it inappropriate for Father Hesburgh to present President Ford with an honorary doctorate degree. Walshe proceeded to tell us that students are unhappy that President Ford has not shown a central concern for the poor and they are unhappy of his refunding of the war in Indochina. Dr. Walshe was then asked what the President's reaction was and he said, "the President indicated he understood our views."

The President then shook a few more hands and said, "I now want to wish you good luck on Friday." He was then corrected and said, "no, on Thursday." This was an apparent reference to Notre Dame University basketball team's upcoming encounter with the University of Maryland. The President then departed for the luncheon.

Walt Rodgers, AP Radio
John Mashek, U.S. News
and World Report

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