

Iverson Addresses Class

Mr. F. Kenneth Iverson, president of Nucor Steel Corporation of Charlotte, was recently the guest lecturer in the Economic Geography Class at Belmont Abbey College.

The topic of Iverson's lecture was "How Small Steel Competes with Big Steel in a Time of Industry Crisis." In his talk he also explained to the class the contribution of small industrial companies to the American market.

The Nucor Steel Corporation, supplying 25 percent of all steel joists sold in the United States, operates from three plants in South Carolina, Texas, and Nebraska. Iverson took charge of the company in the sixties and has since initiated a turnaround which took the company from a 2 million dollar deficit in 1965 to a 25 percent equity return in 1974.

Iverson contributes his success to expansion policies which included a concentration on the production of steel joists and a lack of union labor restrictions. Nucor employees work on a bonus incentive plan which, according to Iverson, increases productivity and provides an opportunity for higher wages.



KENNETH IVERSON

Immediately following his presentation, Iverson was the guest of honor at a luncheon in the Oak Room of the College. Also attending the luncheon were Fr. John Bradley, president of the College, Warren Clark, vice president for development, and Jack Hanahan, chairman of the physical science division of the College.



Insight

By FR. JOHN P. BRADLEY

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Over the last few months, Father Bradley has made a number of video tapes for a television program titled *Something To Think About*. These tapes are shown at various times on Channel 3, WBTV in Charlotte. Transcripts of four of these video tapes appear below.

VALUES

An article in a recent issue of the *New Yorker Magazine*, describing the celebration in London of Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee, makes the following observation: "People remarked with pleasure that it was natural for the older generation to turn out to acclaim the queen since old-fashioned loyalty was built into their systems. But it was the often much criticized, worrying, frustrated young who were also seen voting with lungs of brass for the visible idea of steady devotion to duty, happy marriage and family life, strong religious feeling, and unfailing reliability." Note well those values which the young people applauded: steady devotion to duty, happy marriage and family life, strong religious feeling, and unfailing reliability. Note, too, that they voted for these values with "lungs of brass" because they saw them exemplified in the life of Queen Elizabeth.

Over the past few years in my work with young people at Belmont Abbey College, I have often thought of the difficulties they have to face in these times. They need and want, I believe, to see in their parents, teachers, national leaders, in the adult society generally, these very values the British youngsters saw and applauded in Queen Elizabeth. Too seldom, unfortunately, nowadays do they see this.

Consider, too, that the educational philosophy to which they are exposed in most schools, colleges, and universities today does nothing to reinforce these values.

Again, they are constantly exposed also to the all-pervasive, vast apparatus of various media disseminating attitudes that undermine these values.

Considering all these difficulties our young people face nowadays, at a time in their lives when they have to form for themselves a sound value system that will give meaning and purpose to their lives, is it any wonder they are often so frustrated? We adults should learn that the sound values desperately needed by our young people and the society we live in can only be taught if we practice what we preach.

SPIRITUAL YEARNINGS

E. F. Schumacher, a British economist and internationally renowned adviser on technology to various governments, came to the United States in the Spring of 1977 on a lecture tour and created here something of a sensation. Audiences overflowed wherever he spoke,

fifty members of Congress assembled in Washington to hear him, and President Carter arranged to meet with him in private. His message, drawn from a book he had written in 1973 titled *Small Is Beautiful*, challenged the efficiency and morality of high-consumption economics and industrial gigantism.

Schumacher's warning that there is an end to growth and to endless consumption is timely, but for me the deeper and even more important part of his message is expressed in this statement: "The modern experiment to live without religion has failed." He reached this conclusion rather recently, for, as he tells us, "I was brought up with an anti-religious stance in the spirit of science," and only a few years ago "my eyes were opened to Christianity." This led him to an ancient truth often obscured in our times, a truth he expressed thus: "Man's needs are infinite and can be fulfilled only in the spiritual realm."

We rightly marvel at the fine achievements of modern science, but we should also realize that many of the problems baffling highly industrialized societies today are beyond the reach of all the marvels of science. We human beings have needs that billions of dollars cannot meet, we have yearnings that material things can never satisfy, for, as another ancient truth reminds us, "Man does not live by bread alone."

HUMAN LIMITATIONS

Winston Churchill once said, "Democracy is the worst form of political system ... except all the others." This remark contains an important insight into human nature, an insight that is too often ignored nowadays, for it draws our attention to the fact that any system involving human beings will be limited and flawed to some extent simply because human beings have their flaws and limitations. Consequently, Churchill tells us, even in the best democratic political system, elected representatives of the people will be limited in their efforts to achieve the common good and some of them will abuse the trust placed in them by their constituents. Churchill reminds us, however, that despite these human failings, the democratic system is better than any alternative.

This important insight into human nature is not grasped, it seems to me, by the many people in our society nowadays who seemingly are "turned off the system" at the first glimpse of human failings. These people unrealistically believe that human institutions can be perfect.

We should, of course, always strive to improve our political system, our economic system, and, indeed, all our institutions, and we should punish those who abuse

them. At the same time, however, we should also always strive to avoid the utopianism that foolishly imagines any human society can be flawless.

The poet, Robert Burns, had some realistic advice for those caught up in the utopianism that is abroad in our times when he said: "There's so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us, it ill becomes any of us to say aught of the rest of us."

CRISIS OF MEANING

Recently I gave the graduation talk at a high school and I opened the talk by quoting a few lines of the song "What's It All About, Alfie?" -- What's it all about, Alfie? Is it just for the moment we live? What's it all about when we sort it out, Alfie?

I chose this topic for a number of reasons: the question posed in the song is and always has been the most fundamentally important question for each and every human being, the ultimate human question -- Who am I, and what is the meaning of my life? Despite this, our schools and colleges nowadays pay little attention to it, something I believe the great thinkers who have addressed this question throughout the ages would find surprising.

Secondly, I chose this topic because I agree with the many thoughtful observers of our present times who warn us that we suffer from a crisis of meaning. Our materialistic technological culture tends to de-personalize us, making it more difficult for us to have a sure grasp of our identity as human beings and confusing us as to the true meaning and purpose of our lives. This leads to the many social problems so common today: drug addiction, alcoholism, animalistic sexual excess, runaway divorce rates, soaring suicides, etc.

Throughout the ages human beings have found the most satisfying answers to the question who am I and what's the meaning of my life in the teachings of the world's great religions which offer a spiritual answer to this ultimate human question. But a spiritual answer demands faith, and faith is not highly regarded in our materialistic technological lives.

We should, I believe, have learned, however, that money and material things are not the answer to our crisis of meaning. One dramatic piece of evidence for that was provided by the miserable life and death of that poor, pathetic billionaire, Howard Hughes. For me and for millions of others even today is the spiritual answer furnished by my Christian Faith. Commenting on this, the brilliant Saint Augustine said: "My heart was made for Thee, O God, and it is restless till it rests in Thee."

And that's what it's all about, Alfie.

Now that is something to think about!