

1-18-1962

Lenoir to Jim, 18 January 1962

Lenoir Chambers (1891-1970)

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The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK 1, VIRGINIA

LENOIR CHAMBERS
-Editor-

514 Fairfax Avenue

January 18, 1962

Dr. James W. Silver,
Department of History, College of Liberal Arts,
The University of Mississippi,
University, Mississippi.

Dear Jim:-

First, I am sorry that you ran into a bad time of it physically when you go back from Gettysburg. That hernia operation, I have always understood, can lead to painful days before you are up-and-at-'em again; and I am sorry you had weeks of it. I hope all things go well now.

Second, I am sorry to be delayed all along the line. Everything about Christmas was distracting. Then, at the end of the year, I retired as editor of The Virginian-Pilot, having reached age 70 a few days before, and all that took a lot of doing. I have had to set aside many things I wanted to do. Surrounding me now are boxes and bales of papers from my over-loaded office, and when I can dig my way out is a 20th Century mystery.

In other circumstances I should have written you earlier to tell you how much meat I thought you had in your talk at Gettysburg and how much everyone owed to you for the success of the conference. I am indebted to you more than any other participant. You could not possibly have known much about me, and you must have taken me with a large dose of faith. I am pleased and grateful that you did.

If you knew how much your Gettysburg associates spoke well of you behind your back, you would be proud and happy.

I missed Dr. Jerome W. Jones (the only one I did miss) because my wife and I wished to reach Norfolk that night. So when Eaton finished, I ran away. But I agree with you that the criticism rarely reached a serious level and that a panel discussion would have added a touch of drama and perhaps gaiety. The audience would have enjoyed it. But with most of your participants I think you have reason for genuine satisfaction.

Third, I had in mind asking for the text of your talk because I wanted to take a hard look at it, and I am especially glad you sent it. I think the case for making a book out of it is strong. My only uncertainty grows out of my ignorance as to whether other books have argued this thesis before you. Since you know the field, although I do not, I assume that such an examination of the tragedy of Southern leadership has not been done, or, if done, was not done thoroughly or adequately or interestingly.

The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK 1, VIRGINIA

LENOIR CHAMBERS

Editor

About the main thesis I have no doubt. You have brought together in this paper too much evidence of the essential tragedy, of the misjudgments and the false leadership, to leave any question about that. It is a bad record, and there is no getting away from it.

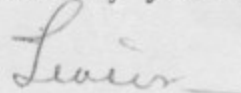
I note your statement ^{that} "it is all dangerous ground." You know far more about the Deep South than I do. I think an intelligent statement in book form of the case you stated in lecture form would not be "dangerous" in any serious sense in the Virginia-North Carolina area about which I do know something, or in any of the non-South part of the country. Oh, perhaps, minor cries and moans from the first impact would be heard here and there in various parts of the South. Perhaps some rabid Dixiecrat type of congressman, editor, or local politician would raise a holler. But I doubt that this would amount to much.

In your part of the world I can understand the possibility of worse reaction. But I don't know enough about that to have any opinion or advice for you. Your colleagues or your friends elsewhere in that part of the South should be able, I should think, to help you on this issue.

I regard the basic idea as having large-scale potential^a, and I should like to see you develop it.

Let me know how things march. And be assured of my appreciation for what you have done for me and of my good wishes for you in every respect. My wife joins me. She had a good time in Gettysburg. You see, many people are in your debt.

Sincerely yours,



Lenoir Chambers.