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Bell Wiley to Jim, 4 January 1963

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I'm not organizing a campaign this time, but in reading in my preferential ballot for SHA I put John Hope Franklin No. 1 for V. Pres. and Dave Potter, No. 2. 1965 would be a good year for Franklin to be Pres.

EMORY UNIVERSITY

ATLANTA 22, GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

4 Jan. 1963

Dear Jim:

Thank you for your note. Ralph McGill had a fine blast at Barnett in this morning's Constitution; since it is not apt to be published in those parts, even though it is a syndicated column, I'll send the clipping along.

You're on the ground and know the situation a lot better than I do, but looking at things from afar, I see advantages of your taking the time that is left to you and looking for a good permanent job, rather than waiting until you're cast adrift and then having to take something on relatively short notice. Then, I think that your position as President of the SHA may have some bargaining advantage, and perhaps this is worth more while you're actually in the spot than after you become past president. I don't see how one of your convictions and personality can hope for an atmosphere that is conducive to good teaching and productive scholarship at Ole Miss. Maybe 25 years from now the bitterness will have softened, but that will not do our generation any good. I know that there is a great deal of satisfaction in standing up to the forces of evil, even at the risk of life and limb; and I think that you might experience something of a let-down if you got into a more serene environment. You have rendered a wonderful service to right-minded people, in Miss. and throughout the country, in putting up the fight that you have. But you have paid a big price, and I have serious doubt that what you will have to pay from now on, is worth the toll that it takes in terms of stamina, health, and impingement on scholarly work in and out of the classroom. Ole Miss is destined to be a fourth-rate institution for the next quarter of a century, I sincerely think, and Mississippi will slip even farther down the scale of backwardness.

I think that you ought to plan to get out, on as good terms as possible, and find you a solid, permanent position in a good institution, where you can devote yourself to teaching and writing under conditions that will be most propitious. You have the makings of a superior book in your projected volume on Southern leadership. It will be hard for you to do justice to the study at Ole Miss.

I can understand your desire to give the address that you have in mind for next November while still at Ole Miss, but I should not think that this ought to count too heavily in considering your whole future.

Harvey Young thinks that there might be an opening at Florida Presbyterian, a new school at St. Petersburg, which has been adding one year at a time as it gets into operation. They made him an excellent offer two or three years ago. He thinks it is a first class institution, and if you want him to put out a feeler for you, write to him. He knows one of the deans very well. We have heard that Washington University in St. Louis was considering making a major appointment in American History. You probably know about that. None of us here is acquainted with any of the history folk there.

I'll keep my ear to the ground, and if I hear of anything promising will pass the word on.

Watched Ole Miss play on January 1. I had mixed feelings, but I find it impossible to generate any enthusiasm any more for an institution that I once felt very warmly toward.

Had Xmas notes from Sam Olden, written on the train while he headed home for Yazoo City for the holidays, and from Allie Wing, a career army officer, taking an advanced course at the Army War College. Both expressed sorrow about the blindness and stupidity manifested by Miss. Allie used to take the segregationist view when he argued with me in class. He has seen the light. But, alas, many who had moderate views then, have become ardent members of the CC.

You know what to do with my advice - take it or leave it; but I wanted to share my thoughts with you. Best wishes to all.

As ever
Bell Wiley