

Correspondence: Michelini Francis J.
1972 August

WILKES COLLEGE
WILKES-BARRE
PENNSYLVANIA

August 9, 1972

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Mr. President:

It was with deep appreciation that I noted your reference to Wilkes College in your presentation to Congress of the amendment to include private colleges in the federal government's program of disaster relief.

Your statement that Wilkes is neither large nor wealthy was correct. In enrollment and curriculum, we are very similar to your own alma mater, Whittier College. The growth and increasing excellence of Wilkes College during its short lifetime have been significantly instrumental in the renaissance of this formerly depressed coal-mining region. As the area unemployment rate declined from about 17 per cent in the early 1950s to a rate near the national average in the late 1960s, enrollment at the College tripled and its assets grew tenfold. Indeed, the growth of Wilkes was a stimulus to the local economy, and the programs initiated by the College acted as an attraction to national firms which chose to locate here. It is because of this involvement of the College with the community that restoration of Wilkes College is so essential to the rebuilding of Wyoming Valley.

We are hopeful that with the assistance of your Administration, the Class of 1973 will graduate in June from an institution which will stand as testimony to the determination of our people to meet and rise above such challenges as presented by the recent disaster. Commencement, 1973, will be a particularly significant occasion for those young men and women who will have completed their education despite the loss of their family homes and the other hardships created by our current circumstances. This occasion would be even more meaningful could you, as the man largely responsible for the reconstruction we shall see completed around us at that time, present our Commencement Address. Your addressing the graduates of Wilkes College at the conclusion of a year of struggle, in which you assisted us so greatly, would be an event of celebration to the people of Wyoming Valley -- a signal that the initial struggle has been won, a source of renewed confidence in the future of our community and our nation, and a reaffirmation of

The President

-2-

August 10, 1972

our belief that private institutions and private citizens, working with the cooperation of their government, can surmount any hardship and rebuild a better life. In short, your Commencement Address could provide the people of this community with "the lift of a driving dream," which they will so sorely need after the turmoil and frustration of a long winter's struggle.

I recognize the tremendous demands which the Presidency places upon your time. However, I am hopeful that your schedule will permit you to deliver this address at our Commencement, scheduled for Sunday, June 3, 1973. Incidentally, we are planning to award an honorary degree to Mr. Frank Carlucci at this Commencement, in recognition of his efforts on our behalf as your White House coordinator of disaster relief. If your attendance at our Commencement is impossible, please plan to visit our campus any time, at your convenience, to see the progress we are making and to speak with our students. Be assured that you will receive a warm and enthusiastic welcome from everyone at Wilkes College and from the people of Wilkes-Barre.

Again, my thanks for your interest and concern for us as we face the difficult times ahead. As the signs posted on homes and businesses throughout the Valley proclaim: "Rebuild -- We Will!"

Respectfully yours,

Francis J. Michelini
President

FJM:mc

Copies to: Senator Scott
Senator Schweiker
Congressman Flood
Mr. Shaffer
Judge Rosenn ✓

5012
100-295-5555
100-295-5555
100-295-5555
100-295-5555