

March 31, 1942

Mr. W. L. Batt
Director of Materials
War Production Board
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bill,

Thank you very much for your letter of March 20. It is terribly nice of you to give so much consideration to the problem of the Bennington Commencement. My suggestion would be that you follow your own impulses and talk rather informally from notes. The Bennington community does like "red meat" and the mistake that many speakers have made is in "talking down" to the audience. What they like is to be taken seriously and to be talked to with the greatest directness and frankness.

As far as the subject matter is concerned, I think that should be left entirely to you. The war, of course, will be uppermost in the minds of everybody and I am sure that whatever you have to say at that time will be interesting to everybody. The only worry I have about the informality is, frankly, that we should like publicity on your Commencement address. What you have to say is of great public importance, so I am wondering if it would be possible for you to give the talk from notes but also to give us in advance a good snappy statement to be sent out to the press.

The Commencement address is held at 11:00 in the morning. There are no academic processions and caps and gowns are not worn. The actual awarding of degrees takes place at four o'clock in the afternoon and is a brief ceremonial lasting only fifteen or twenty minutes. We would like very much for you to stay over to see that and also to meet all the graduates and guests of the College who will be there in the afternoon. That is not absolutely necessary however. The College car and chauffeur will be at your disposal, so that we will be able to take you to Williamstown whenever it is most convenient for you.

I can't tell you how much we appreciate your willingness to deliver the Commencement address. I announced to our Board of Trustees at their meeting in New York last week that you were to be the Commencement speaker and there were large cheers from everybody present. I think you know some of our Board members. Mrs. Leach