

1991

Iannone, Carol: Letters Opposing Nomination of (1991): Correspondence 30

Lynne V. Cheney

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Recommended Citation

Cheney, Lynne V., "Iannone, Carol: Letters Opposing Nomination of (1991): Correspondence 30" (1991). *Iannone, Carol: Letters Opposing Nomination of (1991)*. Paper 54.
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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

THE CHAIRMAN

March 27, 1991

Dr. Phyllis Franklin
Executive Director
Modern Language Association of America
10 Astor Place
New York, New York 10003

Dear Phyllis:

I appreciate your kind personal words about my leadership of the NEH. This is a fine agency, and I take pride in whatever I have been able to do to help bring that about.

I am also gratified that we can agree that Carol Iannone is a "well-published" author. I am surprised, however, that you now question her qualifications on the grounds that she has been employed as an adjunct professor. Many people have been adjuncts, myself among them. In any case, your objection no longer holds, because Iannone is now teaching full-time in the Gallatin Division of New York University.

I fear that one of the many regrettable aspects of the MLA's campaign against Iannone will be to damage the MLA's own reputation. Your arguments against her have repeatedly been based on a very narrow notion of what constitutes a proper career in the humanities--and anyone failing to fit that mold need not apply. Surely, this is not the image of itself that MLA should be advancing.

Moreover, the statistics you use to frame your case against Carol Iannone have been hastily gathered and erroneously interpreted--an ironic situation when you are using them as context to object to someone's scholarly qualifications. By way of illustration, you have said in two letters now that there has been a decline in college-university faculty in the humanities on the National Council. The

statistics you cite in your March 4, 1991 letter are: "In 1975 [college and university faculty in the humanities] represented 26.9% of the body; by 1990 they made up only 15.4% of the Council." I am unable to determine what errors of accounting and interpretation led to these figures, but I can report that as of our February 1991 Council meeting, 29 percent of members were college or university faculty members in the humanities--more, in other words, than the 1975 figure MLA seems to regard as optimum.

Carol Iannone's confirmation would bring that percentage to 33 percent, because she is slated to replace one of the public members. If your goal is to increase humanities faculty representation on the Council, you should be working for her, rather than against.

Sincerely,



Lynne V. Cheney
Chairman

cc: Members of the Senate Committee
on Labor and Human Resources
MLA Executive Council