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## Ben Hilbun to Dr. Buchanan, 9 February 1963

Ben Hilbun

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This is a verbatim copy of Mr. Hilbun's letter to Mr. Buchanan

Dear Dr. Buchanan:

I have read very carefully your letter of February 8, 1956, submitting your resignation at the termination of your contract.

I then immediately asked your Department Head, Dr. John K. Betterworth; your Dean, Dr. R. C. Weems; the Dean of the College, Dr. Herbert Drennon; and the Administrative Assistant to the President, Dr. T. K. Martin, to come to my office in order that I might acquaint them with the contents of your letter. It developed that you had not discussed this matter with any one of these gentlemen and, of course, you had not discussed it with me.

According to your letter, you appear to be at variance with certain policies of the Legislature, the Board of Trustees, the President of Mississippi State College, the chancellor of the University of Mississippi, and a member of the Board of Trustees whose name you did not call. Your conclusion seems to be "that a college cannot perform its function as an institution of higher learning" under these policies enunciated by the above mentioned individuals and agencies.

I should like to state here what I have repeatedly said to the faculty and what has been by lifelong conviction. I yield to no man in cherishing academic freedom. To my way of thinking, the scholar has not only the right but the duty to seek the truth and to follow the pursuit wherever it may lead. The scholar has the right and duty to proclaim his findings in the classroom and in the printed word. These rights and obligations of duty have not been violated at Mississippi State College during my experience nor will they be as long as I am in the President's Office.

There is a line between the promulgation of the findings of scholarship and the promulgation of opinion and personal bias. You have failed, it seems to me, to distinguish between them.

Your resignation is based upon the five particulars outlined in your letter, your attitude toward which has gravely impaired your usefulness here. Your Department Head, your Dean, the Dean of the College, and the Administrative Assistant to the President concur in this conclusion.

In view of the situation which your letter creates and in the interests of Mississippi State College, I am accepting your resignation in the spirit in which it was submitted. I am relieving you of duties effective as of this date (February 9, 1956). In fairness to you and as per contractual agreement, your salary is being continued at the discretion of the President of Mississippi State College and the Board of Trustees, to whom I shall report your resignation at the monthly meeting on February 16.

Since you released copies of your letter to the press at the same time you submitted your letter to me, I am making the same distribution of my reply.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Ben Hilbun

Ben Hilbun

cc: Professor John K. Betterworth  
Chairman, History & Government Dept.

The Commercial Appeal  
The Birmingham News  
The Delta Democrat-Times