



460 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
PORTER ROUTH, *Executive Secretary*

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37219

WILMER C. FIELDS, *Public Relations Secretary*

January 12, 1965

Subject: BAPTIST PRESS STORY CHALLENGED

Dear Editor:

The recent Baptist Press release, "Resignation Reveals Southeastern Protest," has been challenged by Editor Jack Gritz as "incomplete, inaccurate and one-sided" and a "grave injustice to the administration and trustees."

Such charges from anyone always call for a review of Baptist Press handling of the questioned story. Since state editors are a part of the Baptist Press system we naturally take very seriously any expressions of dissatisfaction with the way some story has been handled.

The greatest asset any news service has is its reputation for accuracy, objectivity, fairness, and reliability. We cannot afford to betray your trust in us. When corrections or additions are warranted we are always glad to run them. When a review shows such charges to be untrue we stand behind our stories.

After checking again with our sources of information and reviewing the handling of the above story we stand behind it as released to you on January 1. Although we dislike any situation which brings about disagreement with the judgment of our good friend, Editor Gritz, we are compelled to verify the accuracy and fairness of the story and to say that--within the limitations of the decision of the seminary trustees and administration to refrain from comment on the matter--the story was balanced.

Two state editors who have the greatest opportunity to be most fully and completely informed about the Southeastern Seminary situation have responded to the letter of Editor Gritz about the Baptist Press story. I have their permission to quote from their letters to Editor Gritz. Editor C. R. Daley has just completed six years as trustee of Southeastern, three of which included membership on the Instruction Committee. He says to Editor Gritz, "I can appreciate your concern, but cannot agree with your criticism of the Baptist Press release." Among other things, he adds "... as a former trustee involved in the affair, I do not believe the story did any injustice to the trustees." Editor Marse Grant is close to the campus geographically (17 miles away) and otherwise vitally interested in the school. He wrote, in part, "Baptist Press has gone to great extremes to release a fair and objective story. The fact that it has not been challenged at any point by the seminary is testimony as to its accuracy and fairness."

Like a good editor should, Editor Gritz included a local angle in The Baptist Messenger story (January 7, 1965) of the professors' resignations. He included a short statement from the Oklahoma trustee of the Seminary regarding the matter. Everything included in The Messenger story and the statement of the trustee was covered in the Baptist Press story.

In summary, the Baptist Press story stands as reported.

The denomination's press service depends on the willingness of many people, including the state editors, to share in the important task of adequate news coverage. Thanks to you for every constructive effort you put forth in this direction.

Sincerely,

W. C. Fields
Director, Baptist Press