

On Changing The Charter

The Board of Trustees' suit to change the school's charter is one of the most far-reaching decisions Rice has made in its brief history. Because of its wide implications, it ought to be examined from several different aspects.

In the first place, any effort to alter a will raises grave questions. When a society provides, as ours does, for a man to direct the uses of his property after his death, and say what shall and shall not be done with it, to what extent can men several generations later substitute their judgment for his? The University is the fulfillment of William Marsh Rice's plan; but he is dead, and times have changed. Would he accept the changes the Trustees have proposed? Or, on the other hand, is it any longer his to judge?

These are questions we cannot answer. We doubt that any Rice students can answer them; but this is no reason for students to ignore them, or pretend they do not matter. Those who support the Board's decision, however delighted they may be at its objective, should never forget the seriousness of the means needed to achieve the objective.

The aims of a change in the charter are, obviously, two: integration and tuition. What students can defend or condemn, then, are these aims, and the spirit in which they are proposed. A dis-

cussion of the legality of changing the charter is something which can—and should—be divorced from the desirability of the changes themselves.

Looking at the proposals in this light, we find much more to praise than to blame. Integration of the school may be necessary for Rice to obtain research grants from the federal government, or lure certain professors to the campus; but it has a value beyond that. The South's racial problems are ultimately problems of communication and understanding; they can never solved by force or judicial fiat, but only by education. Its universities are in a position not merely to practice what they preach, but to provide positive leadership. If the problem is soluble, this is the road to its solution.

If the South really sees itself defending localism, and not just using "states' rights" as a smokescreen to cover up a hatred of the Negro, then the region can only prove its sincerity and good faith by abandoning integration voluntarily where those arguments are irrelevant, while working conscientiously toward an equitable solution in other areas.

This Rice has sought to do. We applaud the decision of the Board, and join with the majority of the student body in expressing our hope that their objective can be realized.

—G. S.