'RICE'S HONOR'

It's Unanimous: Song Stinks

By GRIFFIN SMITH

'Rice's Honor,' currently the subject of campus concern, has a history of unpopularity which must rank it high among the least-loved alma maters in America.

Throughout its entire history, it has been condemned, ridiculed, denounced and scorned by students and alumni alike. Its defenders have been few indeed.

A 1925 Thresher editorial kicked off the barrage by declaring that "the sentiment in the song is not such that it could be used as a commencement hymn and be revered as such by all alumni." The writer called for a new song immediately.

Later in the year it was condemned editorially as "our only substitute for an alma mater." But overt criticism died down until 1938, when it rose again more sharply than before.

AN UNNAMED alumnus wrote that "after singing and hearing 'Rice's Honor' for several years, I have confirmed my early conclusion that it is everything a school song should not be."

He added: "It was bad from the beginning—a stolen tune and words that might have been written at a prize fight."

A freshman, in a letter the following week, said the alma mater should "certainly be retained as a fight song." But he concluded: "added to our repertoire, however, should be one of those heartswelling school songs that makes us love a physics exam."

SOLID SUPPORT came again from the Thresher. Editor Francis Collins urged student action to change the song. "Every case on record has wanted it changed," he pointed out.

The controversy simmered along for twenty years, students wavering between denunciation and derision. It came out into the open again in 1959 when a definite alternative — "The Rice Hymn" — was suggested. A contest was held, and new words were written for the substitute song.

Criticism of "Rice's Honor" continued to mount. A letter that year from a senior commented:

"I HAVE LONG felt that 'Rice's Honor' just doesn't have it as an alma mater. Like most seniors I would like to take with me a few fond memories and an inspirational alma mater. However, nothing has been less inspiring to me than 'Rice's Honor.'"

President Dwight Eisenhower's visit in 1960 poured gasoline on the fires. One student wrote scathingly after the televised speech:

"IT CERTAINLY is a helluva shame Rice University does not have a decent alma mater."

"I have never seen a more ludicrous scene than that of the Special Convocation of students, faculty, and alumni singing their "fight, fight, fight," song before the President of the United States."

Since 1960 replacement of "Rice's Honor" has been an on-again, off-again project of the Student Senate. Indications are that, this time, something concrete may be done.