TWO CULTURES

Pitzer On Snow, Sunday

By RICHARD BEST

Rice President Kenneth S. Pitzer will present his views on the relationship between the sciences and the humanities—the subject of the highly controversial thesis of Charles Percy Snow—in a speech to be delivered in the Autry House, Sunday evening at 7:30 pm.

Presented as a service to the university by the Presbyterian Student Association, Dr. Pitzer's address will be followed by a discussion period.

The Rev. Earl S. Mulley, Presbyterian Chaplain to Rice, announced Friday that President Pitzer, who is an eminent scientist in his own right, is not contemplating a review of Snow's ideas, but rather a presentation of his own thoughts on the relationship between the two cultures.

Sir Charles is the Author of “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution,” which engendered a major academic squabble. His thesis is that between the two cultures there is a “gulf of mutual incomprehension.”

The humanists, Snow believes, are too absorbed in man's tragic condition to possess a social conscience. The scientists on the other hand optimistically believe that something can be done until proved otherwise, but are unable to see any relevance to the whole literature of traditional culture.

WHILE THE scientist may consider even Dickens “tangled and esoteric,” the humanist may be unfamiliar with the Second Law of Thermodynamics or even with conceptions of mass and force. This mutual ignorance has produced the result that while “thirty years ago the cultures had long since ceased to speak to each other, . . . at least they managed a kind of frozen smile across the gulf.

“Now the politeness has gone, and they just make faces.” Snow contends that a bridging of the gulf is necessary to raise living standards in the underdeveloped nations.

The work has provoked much

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comment, some of it exceedingly vicious. F. R. Leavis, an influential British literary critic, issued a "ferocious polemic" against the author and thereby called forth a host of defenders.

THE DEAN of Humanities at Rice, W. H. Masterson, recently acknowledged that Snow's view is correct, especially at Rice, where an attempt is made for excellence in both science and the liberal arts. Pitzer himself made mention of the work in this year's Matriculation Address, but did not elaborate his ideas fully. Since then the book, and its ideas have been brought up by many other speakers at the University.

As a scientist and as an educator Pitzer is inexorably caught in the relationship of the two cultures. It is inevitable that his views next Sunday will both reflect and influence University policy in this vital area.