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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The two chief factors leading to Stanford President Kenneth S. Pitzer's resignation in June were "the Nixon administration's failure to end the war in Southeast Asia, which led to increasing disruption on campus, and the reluctance of wealthy Stanford alumni to continue contributing to the university, which they saw as a hotbed of ill-mannered radicals," writes Philip M. Boffey in the current (Aug. 7) issue of Science magazine.

Boffey's article is based mainly on a personal interview with Dr. Pitzer, who is now on vacation until his resignation becomes effective Aug. 31. Vice President and Provost Richard W. Lyman will become acting president Sept. 1.

"Although Stanford's gift receipts and annual fund campaign have shown no precipitous drop as of yet," the article says Pitzer stated, "there are ominous signs for the future. He explained that there has been 'an increasing number of bona fide cases of people with real money who had Stanford in their wills and have actually rewritten their wills to take Stanford out, which is a very worrisome thing in terms of the long run.'

"... Pitzer estimates that the loss certainly mounts up into the 'millions or a major fraction of the millions.'

"Even more troublesome than the actions of the reactionary alumni, Pitzer said, was the failure of the more moderate alumni to offer the university 'active support'...

"There are certain alumni whose minds are so closed to what is going on right now that this just overcomes any overall loyalty to the institution and you're not going to get any support out of them without destroying thy positive values of the university, which would be a greater catastrophe than losing their support,' Pitzer said.

"The problem is that the more reasonable trustees and alumni who clearly understand the situation sometimes get so discouraged by the controversies they get into with these more extreme reactionary alumni that they lose enthusiasm themselves. . . But if all people sit on their hands, things are just going to get worse.'

"Pitzer told a press conference it may be 'oversimplified' to regard the Cambodian invasion as the 'straw that broke the camel's back' and led to his resignation, but he said that is 'a good deal of the story.'

"... He explained that: 'Two years ago when the Stanford trustees approached me. . .it was very apparent to me that this wasn't going to be a placid time in a university such as Stanford. It was clear then that Stanford was one of the major focal points of the radical student attack on universities, and that it was likely to be a major trouble spot.

"But I had hope and reasonable expectations, I thought, that the country might be getting out of Vietnam promptly enough to remove what I regard as. . .one of the major sources of student generation unrest.

"I thought that after a year or two of crisis management one might look forward to a much more constructive period, with the focus on the potentials for educational and research innovation and, of course, the concomitant financial problems and their solution.

"But now we find, and this became particularly apparent after the Cambodian action of the President, that far from having diminished, these problems associated with student alienation. . .have intensified.'

"Pitzer said his resignation was not 'forced' by the trustees," according to Boffey. "He said that during a period of campus turmoil in May, following the Cambodian invasion, he decided that the possibility of resignation should be given 'careful thought.'

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"Then in June, when things quieted down, he 'took stock' and consulted with a number of trustees, particularly with regard to what positive fund-raising support he might expect.

" 'I decided the positive count was too low,' he said, so he submitted his resignation on 25 June. 'It was my initiative,' he said, 'but the reaction it got showed that it had occurred to others, though they were too polite to say it.'

"Pitzer. . .barely mentioned radical students as a factor behind his resignation until Science asked whether he meant to indicate that his problems were caused almost entirely by reactionary alumni. Then he said that the radical students (and nonstudents as well) were 'more than anyone else the basic cause' of Stanford's problems because, if the radicals weren't causing disruption, then the alumni wouldn't be reacting.

"But he stressed that the radicals are a relatively small part of the Stanford community and he said they are only able to 'cause as much difficulty as they do' because 'the student body and faculty have not, up to this point, regarded them as as big a danger as they are.'

"Pitzer seemed somewhat ambivalent about his relations with the faculty. On the one hand, he said he had received 'excellent support in terms of formal faculty action.'

"But on the other hand he bemoaned the fact that there had not been 'a lot more letters to the student newspaper from respected faculty members expressing a stabilizing point of view and reemphasizing the right of others to carry on their activities free of interference from the radicals.'

"He noted that there are 'a few faculty members who say rather outrageous things in support of the student radicals,' and that if the other faculty members had been more active in criticizing the radicals this would have helped diminish the influence of the radicals and would have presented 'a more balanced picture to the outside community.'

"At the time of his interview with Science, Pitzer seemed relaxed and happy and not the least bit shaken by his experience," according to Boffey.

"He also professed himself 'more than happy to turn over thy police chief responsibilities to someone else.'

"For the immediate future, Pitzer is planning to take a year's sabbatical, proposed by the trustees. He will spend the time in travel and in 'catching up on what is going on in chemistry and related sciences.' Beyond that, his plans are vague—possibly a professorship at Stanford or elsewhere, possibly foundation work.

"But of one thing he's certain. 'I'm not interested in another academic administrative post.' "

Boffey pointed out that Pitzer's "career has heretofore been marked by a progression of successes. In 1950, as a young government research administrator, he was designated one of the ten outstanding young men of the year by the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

"As a professional scientist he has long been considered a 'chemist's chemist.' The esteem of his peers was signified by his election to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences in 1949 and by his receipt of the coveted Priestly medal of the American Chemical Society in 1969.

"He has served as research director of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), as chairman of the AEC's General Advisory Committee, and as a member of the President's Science Advisory Committee. At Berkeley, where he taught for 24 years, he served as vice chairman of the campus division of the Academic Senate and was chosen by the faculty to serve on its academic freedom committee after a loyalty oath controversy there.

"Then, in 1961, he became president of Rice University in Houston, Texas, and presided over a 7-year period of growth capped by a successful capital funds capital funds campaign."