

Biologist Barry Commoner is Mandeville lecturer

April 20, 1971

Biologist Barry Commoner, known as the "Paul Revere of ecology," is scheduled to give the spring quarter lecture in the continuing Mandeville Lecture Series Tuesday, May 4, at the University of California, San Diego.

Dr. Commoner, Director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Washington University in St. Louis, will talk on "The Human Condition: Crisis and Promise." The lecture, to begin at 8:00 p.m. in the UCSD Gymnasium, is free and open to the public.

The Mandeville Lectures are presented through the UCSD Campus Programming Board as the result of a gift from the late Ernest W. Mandeville.

Dr. Commoner is considered one of the best informed and most articulate spokesmen for the safeguarding of man's natural environment from the effects of over-population and industrialization. He joined the faculty of Washington University in 1947, serves as chairman of the Department of Botany from 1965 to 1966 and has been director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems since 1966.

He is a brilliant researcher in plant physiology and virology and is noted for his pioneering studies of fundamental problems on the physiochemical basis of biological processes.

Commoner was born on May 28, 1917, in Brooklyn, New York. At Columbia University he majored in zoology and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi. He obtained his B.A. degree with honors in 1937. His graduate work was done at Harvard University where he received his Ph.D. degree in biology in 1941.

Long before ecology became a major national concern, Commoner insisted that scientists had a moral obligation to play a role in public affairs and to keep the populace well informed about the potentially disastrous effects of science and technology on man's habitat.

Expanding his horizons to encompass the totality of man's environment, Commoner has in recent years expressed himself increasingly in terms of what he regards as the "impending crisis." Of particular concern to him has been the pollution of air and water by the excessive use of chemical fertilizers, detergents, insecticides, and other harmful substances.

He has asserted that the use of any new chemical should be preceded by a study of the ecological consequences of its use and has proposed the establishment of a new federal agency for the purpose of making such studies. He has also proposed that organic sewage be returned directly to the soil in a natural cycle rather than being changed by sewage treatment plants into chemical compounds that threaten to upset the balance of nature.

Concerning the population explosion, Commoner has warned that by the year 2000 the world will contain between six and eight billion people, the maximum that is food system can sustain.

The Center for the Biology of Natural Systems was established under a grant from the United States Public Health Service. Its purpose is to conduct basic research on the relationship between man and his natural environment and to train graduate students in that area.

Commoner is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and served as chairman of its committee on science in the promotion of human welfare from 1960 to 1966. He is also a member of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Society of Naturalists and the National Parks Association. He is an honorary vice-president of the Soil Association of England and has served as co-chairman of the Scientists' Institute for Public Information.

He has written over 120 articles and papers in lay and professional journals on his specialized field in biology as well as on the broader field of ecology. His book, "Science and Survival," is a study of the problems of humanity in modern technological society.