

## **Biologist Barry Commoner to speak in Third College Communications Lecture Series**

**March 26, 1974**

Biologist Barry Commoner, sometimes called the "Paul Revere of ecology," will be the fourth speaker in the Third College Communications Lecture Series sponsored by the University of California, San Diego.

The prominent scientist and educator will speak at 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 3, in the Multipurpose Room of the Veterans Administration Hospital.

The lecture, titled "Technology, Ideology and Communications: The Current Crisis," is free and open to the public.

Dr. Commoner is a leading spokesman for the cause of safeguarding the environment from the effects of overpopulation and industrialization. He insisted in the public's need to know about the potentially disastrous effects of science and technology long before ecology became a national concern.

A member of the faculty of Washington University in St. Louis since 1947, Dr. Commoner was chairman of the Department of Botany from 1965 to 1969 and now serves as director of the school's Center for the Biology of Natural Systems.

Among his first concerns about the environment was the danger of radioactive fallout and the presence of strontium 90 in the atmosphere caused by nuclear bomb tests. Stating that scientists had a moral obligation to play a role in public affairs, Dr. Commoner expressed shock at the indifference of government authorities to the issue in the early 1950s and subsequently helped found the St. Louis Committee for Nuclear Information.

Dr. Commoner has directed his attention in recent years to what he regards as the "impending crisis" of an ecological disaster. His book "The Closing Circle," published in 1971, is an attempt to explain the scope of the environmental crisis.

In the field of biology, he is noted for his pioneering studies of fundamental problems on the physiochemical basis of biological processes. His early experiments involving plant viruses and their effect on genetic material eventually led him to important discoveries concerning possible immunization and development of antibodies against various diseases in humans.

Later work by his research team resulted in the discovery of free radicals in tissue samples, considered an important step in developing techniques for the early detection of cancer.

Dr. Commoner has challenged the Watson-Crick theory that established deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) as the key to the "secret of life" and to an understanding of heredity. He rejected the interpretation that DNA alone determined the features of living cells and suggested in his book "Science and Survival" that other parts of the cell were capable of transmitting inheritance.

His current research includes studies of the origins and significance of alterations in the environment, the development of new diagnostic techniques in medicine and surgery and the roles of DNA in the inheritance of basic characteristics of species, especially in relation to environmental adaptation.

The Center for the Biology of Natural Systems which he heads was established in 1966 under a \$4.25 million grant from the U.S. Public Health Service. Basic research conducted at the center involves the relationship between man and his natural environment.

Dr. Commoner saw in its establishment the first realistic effort to obtain a deeper understanding of the balance of nature and to investigate the properties of the area of earth, water and atmosphere in which life exists.

Born In Brooklyn. Dr. Commoner, 56, was graduated from Columbia University in 1937 with a bachelor of arts degree in zoology. He received his master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees in biology from Harvard University.

He has written numerous articles and papers in lay and professional journals on his specialized field in biology as well as on ecology. Dr. Commoner serves on several scientific editorial and advisory panels including the board of directors of the National Parks Association.

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