

GENERAL SCIENCE

Guard Against Pressures

► SCIENTISTS MUST GUARD against the breakdown of their integrity by the pressure of social and political forces. Dr. Barry Commoner, biologist of Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., warned.

"The perversion of German science and scientists under the Nazis is a case in point of what can happen when science gets under political influence," Dr. Commoner told SCIENCE SERVICE. Dr. Commoner is chairman of the committee on science in the promotion of human welfare, a standing committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Medical atrocities and other inhuman experiments were performed in the name of science by German scientists who yielded to the political pressures of the Hitler regime.

"It is important to remember this history in order to understand what can happen when scientific integrity bows to social and political considerations," he said.

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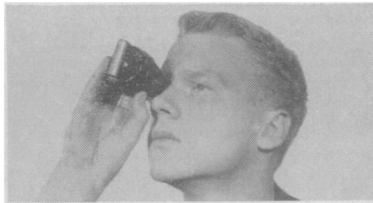
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As part of their responsibility to promote human welfare, the scientist today must anticipate problems rather than wait until they occur before taking action. The current fight against air pollution is an example. "It would have been better to have worked to prevent the pollution of our air rather than try to remove the pollutants as now we must," Dr. Commoner said.

The scientists must alert the community to dangers before economic investments add to the problem. This is what is happening in the area of food additives, Dr. Commoner remarked.

"The danger of food additives is a very serious one," he said. "Economic investment by food industries already has moved to the point where serious economic problems may be involved in limiting and controlling the use of additives, as considerations of health and welfare demand."

He called on all scientists, but particularly biologists, to work with the community in considering such problems as radiation hazards, water pollution, insecticides and food additives.

Since the committee he heads was established two years ago, both interest and action by the scientific community in these areas has been stimulated and progress has already resulted.

An illustration of progress is the change in attitude by the Federal Government toward the problem of radiation from fallout and nuclear development, Dr. Commoner said. The establishment of the Federal Radiation Council by the Congress and

the administration was a reflection of concern over the danger to health and welfare that atomic power development may bring.

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Confusion on Radiation

► THE SCIENTIFIC community has confused the public on the hazards and other effects of radiation, Irving Michelson, director of public service projects for Consumers Union of U. S., Inc., has charged.

Scientists have failed to merit the trust of the consumer in the embryonic nuclear age, he told the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The public has been subject to a variety of "scientific pronouncements" in which opinions are frequently stated as facts. Opposing statements from the scientific community add to the confusion.

"Under such conditions, the public can only be impressed with the untrustworthiness of scientific opinion," Mr. Michelson said. They are justified in making such uncomplimentary judgments as that scientists are not telling all they know.

Under a grant from the Atomic Energy Commission, Consumers Union is making an extensive study of the radioactivity in foods: five man-made and three naturally-occurring. It also is participating in a study of strontium-90 in baby teeth being conducted by the Greater St. Louis Citizens Committee for Nuclear Information.

Mr. Michelson reported that an AEC official stated informally that the public is more likely to believe CU than the AEC. This statement, he said, "shows how serious is the problem of communication between the scientific community and the public." He credited the AAAS for working to correct the problem.

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Do You Know

Early Greeks used bronze containing small percentages of nickel for their coins.

Copper, one of the first metals used by man, was worked as early as 7500 B.C.

Lung cancer occurs 20 times more frequently among patients with tuberculosis than in the general population.

The floors of homes in the Middle East in the fifth and sixth centuries were commonly mosaics of coarse white cubes, or tesserae.

Russia has intercontinental ballistic missiles that can be aimed accurately and reach any U. S. target within 30 minutes.

Such diseases as streptococcosis, milk-borne bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis are rapidly disappearing in the United States because of herd control, vaccination and the use of antibiotics.

White gold is pure gold whitened and hardened by adding nickel.

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