

# CRISIS OF EXPERTS SAYS ROBY SPEAKER

The world is suffering from a crisis of experts, according to eminent scientist, Professor Charles Birch of Sydney University.

The complexities of global management required a new breed of scientist — one with a broader experience and outlook.

"We need people with the ability to think across the boundaries of traditional disciplines," Professor Birch said in presenting the inaugural Keith Roby Lecture in Community Science at Murdoch.

"Everyone is becoming so specialised today that when we go to experts for solutions we only get part of the answer," he said. "For example, the economists tell us how to defeat inflation, but we then face the human problem of unemployment."

Professor Birch's lecture, titled 'Born Again Science', advocated the development of community scientists. These 'Scientists of the future' would have an understanding of many disciplines and would be better equipped to handle the problems of global management.

## Risk

"How much risk are we prepared to take as we enter new realms of science and technology?" Professor Birch asked. "Do we want to go on entrusting our future to specialists?"

It was unlikely, he said, that older universities could produce the 'new breed of scientist'. They were too departmentalised and anything like a 'community scientist' would be frowned upon. Newer universities, such as Murdoch, must accept the responsibility of preparing people with the breadth of outlook to be able to handle the complex global issues of the future.

The Roby Lecture is made possible by a fund established in memory of Dr Keith Roby, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry, who died on November 1 last year.

Dr Roby pioneered study and research in the area of community science. As an undergraduate at Sydney University, Dr Roby was greatly influenced by Professor Birch who had made a strong commitment to involvement in public affairs and theology.

## Fund

The Keith Roby Memorial Fund has raised approximately \$10,000. Donations, which are tax deductible, are most welcome. The fund is designed primarily to bring a visiting lecturer to Perth for the annual Roby Lecture in Community Science. A small committee is working on other projects as a tribute to Keith's work in the field of community science.

The Diploma in Community Science, which will be launched next year, is one of the initiatives so far taken to further Keith's work. Dr Peter Newman will coordinate the Diploma and the interest expressed by prospective students (from throughout Australia) augurs well for the success of the graduate pro-



*Professor Charles Birch*

gramme which can be studied on-campus or externally.

Most people who knew Keith would be familiar with his ideas on community science and his desire for a just, sustainable and participating society. However, many would not be aware of the breadth of Keith's interests and expertise, ranging from important work in theoretical chemistry in the early 1970s to energy analysis, science and technology policy, interdisciplinary science education, the philosophy of science, and active involvement in various political and community organisations.

In order to pay tribute to Keith's vision and career, a book is being prepared which will contain a representative sample of papers in his various areas of interest, together with contributions from those who worked with him in these areas. The book, tentatively titled *The Scientist as Humanist: A Tribute to Keith Roby*, will be available during 1983.