

Robert King Merton

Mr. President, I have the honor to present as a candidate for an honorary degree, ROBERT KING MERTON, a foremost sociologist in this country — a distinguished scholar and teacher. His contributions to the field of sociology range widely in subjects investigated, analytic techniques employed, and theories developed. His subject areas have been diverse, including science and technology in the seventeenth century, relationship between inventions and social conditions over prolonged periods, relationship between social structure and anomie, structure and functions of reference groups, and effects of mass communications.

His techniques and theories in the field are enduring. He was among the first to demonstrate that major advances in scientific knowledge come about in trying to solve the problems of society. He has maintained a lifetime interest in the sociology of knowledge and is a major contributor to this field. He has argued persuasively that the function of research is not only the passive testing of hypotheses but the active initiation, reformulation, and clarification of theories. Through the codification of both substantive theory and analytic procedures in social analysis, he has directed attention to the need for middle-range, special theories which apply to limited ranges of data. Concepts he developed as early as the 1930's remain pertinent to the understanding of the behavior of people in our present turbulent times.

He is widely known as a stimulating teacher at Columbia University. Among his many works, his book, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, now in its third edition, is a classic in American sociology. Therefore, on behalf of the faculty of Kalamazoo College, I recommend that upon him be conferred the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters.