



EDITORIAL

English as the International Language

Not having attended an I.A.U. General Assembly since 1961, I was surprised at the Brighton Assembly to notice to what little extent languages other than English are now being used in the presentation of papers and in discussions. I had a feeling that on the few occasions when French astronomers spoke their own language it was more by way of safeguarding the formal position of French as the other language of the Union than of expecting to be understood. As for Russian and German, I heard no public word of either -- a great contrast to the situation in the 1950's. I felt further that many of our European colleagues would not be flattered to be addressed in their own language in private conversation, but would take this as a slight to their own competence in English.

If, as it would appear, English has become the international language of science, then this puts a great responsibility upon us who speak it as a first language. We must maintain a standard of good speech and good writing and so meet our colleagues half-way in their difficult task of communication in a foreign language. This requires a conscious effort, and I now think that courses in English for us would serve science better than the traditional foreign language requirements of graduate schools.

A horrible example of what we must avoid took place in a joint discussion on planetary astronomy at Brighton. A distinguished American astronomer, who, to begin with, speaks with an unnecessarily strong New York accent, used what I supposed to be a very new and "in" Madison Avenue expression to indicate disagreement of some astronomers with his views -- at least I judged this to be his meaning from the context. Then he had the bad grace to say, "and if any of you don't know what that means you can look it up in a dictionary". Coming away from the session, I was walking with Fracastoro of the Catania Observatory whose competence in English must have cost him much sustained effort. He was furious that anyone should have displayed such arrogance and, apparently purposely, left him and many others completely in the dark as to his meaning.

To meet our responsibility in maintaining good scientific communications I suggest the following program:

- (a) We should, by formal courses, by private study or by invited criticism, learn to write and speak the kind of good English which is taught in schools and colleges in other countries. I can think of few Canadian or American scientists who use English as beautifully as, say, Heckmann or Oort. Most English scientists also do speak and write well; I imagine it stems from the emphasis placed on English in their public schools.
- (b) Without robbing our writing and speech of the colour and subtlety which are among the glories of the English language, we should school ourselves against circumlocutions, embellishments and other faults and devices which detract from clarity. An excellent book on this subject is Sir Ernest Gowers' "Plain Words", available in a Pelican edition.
- (c) We should try to become aware of our own regional accents, and tone them down a little, at least in public speech. Similarly we should avoid slang and currently popular words.
- (d) We should try to get used to the accents of persons of other nationalities, and to think of their methods of speech as colourful and enriching variants of English, just as are the accents of the Irish or the Scots. We should also learn to be aware of certain errors which apparently arise in transposing from their mother tongues. For example, I have noticed that a Slovakian often says "I must not" when he means "I don't have to". Failure to recognize an error like this can result in serious misunderstanding.

In fact, I wonder if there isn't scope for a course in International English to replace the foreign language requirement.

J.F.H.

THE LIBRARY

Those who were away during August must have had a pleasant surprise upon entering the newly redecorated library. The white and gold has been retained in keeping with the traditional Adams decor, and the room again has the elegance which always has evoked the admiration of visitors. It was obviously, a big job for our new librarian to supervise the removal and replacement of all the books, but it gave her the opportunity to make a complete inventory. We should co-operate by searching our bookcases for the two dozen volumes that she has listed as missing.

Sheila Smolkin has come to us with excellent qualifications. After graduating with a B.Sc. in Food Sciences, she took an M.Sc. in Nutrition and then decided to enter the Library Science Course (which requires a prior degree in Arts or Science). This past June she received her B.L.S. with A standing and won the Kathleen Reeves Memorial Award for the highest ranking in the elective course in Special Libraries. She spent the summer of 1969 working in the Science and Medicine Department of the U. of T. Library and did her practice work in March at the National Science Library in Ottawa.

Sheila's husband, Robert, is a lawyer in Toronto. We look forward to meeting him at some of the Observatory affairs.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

The summer travellers to the I.A.U. have all returned by now. The detailed list for who attended which symposium and presented what papers will be published next month.

Dr. P.P. Kronberg spent 4½ weeks doing research on extragalactic radio sources at Jodrell Bank. He also spent 2 weeks in Germany visiting relatives.

Dr. van den Bergh had a 200-inch observing session at Palomar immediately after the I.A.U. Assembly, and is there again this week to observe with the 48-inch.

Dr. Hogg is away for two weeks, visiting briefly her cousin in Geneva and closing her Dunstable home for the winter.

Jack Winzer had a three-week observing session with the 20-inch telescope at Palomar.

Tom Barnes who will be having his Ph.D. oral on Sept. 30 will leave on Oct. 1 for Texas to take up his Postdoctoral Fellowship. Peter Chen left in September for S.U.N.Y., Stony Brook. Raymonde Chimonas accompanied her husband to his new post at the University of Colorado. Bob Lake left in September for the University of Massachusetts.

SEMINARS

September: They were as announced. Dr. Henry is speaking today.

October

Tues. 6th. Dr. Fernie, "The Historical Quest for the Nature of Spiral
DDO Nebulae".

Tues. 13th Dr. Bolton "Spectral Synthesis and Spectral Classification".
DDO

Thurs. 15th
McLennan, Rm. 102
(joint with Physics)

Dr. Philip Morrison of M.I.T.
"A Model for Compact Strong Sources"

Tues. 20th
D.D.O.

Dr. Manuel Peimbert, U. of Mexico
"Physical Conditions in HII Regions".

Wed. 21st
D.D.O.

Dr. Peimbert "Chemical Abundances in Galaxies"

Tues. 27th,
D.D.O.

Dr. Marks, "Rotation of Viscous Stars".

PAPERS SUBMITTED IN SEPTEMBER

S. van den Bergh

"The Stars in Elliptical Galaxies"

"Optical Observations of the Galaxy
Associated with 3C386".

"Optical Observations of the Pair of Galaxies
Associated with the Radio Source 4C31.04".

T.A. Bednarek and
W.H. Clarke

"The Radiative Recombination of Carbon in
Gaseous Nebula"

I.A.U. Appointment

In Brighton Dr. Hogg was appointed Chairman of the committee on
Variable Stars in Globular Clusters.

New Post Doctoral Fellows

Dr. Thomas Bolton, from the University of Michigan who will work
with Drs. Garrison and Heard on spectral classification and spectroscopic
binaries.

Dr. Philip Gregory from the University of Manchester, Nuffield
Radio Astronomy Laboratories, who will work with Drs. MacRae, Seaquist
and Kronberg on radio astronomy.

Dr. Dennis Marks from the University of Michigan who will work
with Dr. Anand on stellar rotation.

All three have part-time appointments as Assistant Professors
and will help with the undergraduate teaching program.

New Graduate Students

Emmanuel Davoust, Centre d'Etudes Mathematiques et Physiques,
Beyrouth, Lebanon.

Robert Deupree, J.I.L.A., Boulder

Claude Faubert, Univ. of Montreal

Jim Gillespie Univ. of Toronto

Austin Gulliver Univ. of Toronto

Bill Herbst, Princeton

Francois Painchaud, Laval.

Serge Pineault, laval

Chris Fritchett, Univ. of Saskatchewan.

Excluding six students who have left recently or are about to terminate their graduate studies, there are 20 continuing graduate students, making an enrolment of 29 which is the largest number we have ever had.

Married

On August 29th, at Bathurst N.B., graduate students Barry Madore and Kathy Riordon.

Born

On September 16th ¹⁹⁷⁰ to Dr. and Mrs. Philip Gregory, a son, Philip Neil.

Bereaved

Our sympathy is extended to Dr. Clement whose mother died in British Columbia on the 23rd of September.