

“GLACIERIZATION”

After the publication of the letters about the use of this term in the issue of April 1955, further correspondence was received. Extracts from two of these communications are given below:

Professor W. B. R. King, F.R.S., writes:

“... you enter a plea for the retention of the term glacierization to indicate ‘the inundation of land by ice,’ but if glacierization does not distinguish between ice-cap covered and valleys filled with glaciers or any of the other possible conditions, is it of much value?

“If we need closely defined terms surely ice-cap covered, covered by piedmont glaciers, retreat of ice cover, etc., give the exact meaning better than an unpleasant-sounding term with its flavour of bureaucratic officialdom.”

Professor Chauncey D. Holmes writes:

“... Whereas the term *can* be used, I believe that the need for it is not critical and its use would tend to make our writing less intelligible to workers in other fields of geology. . . .

“... In my own writings, I intend to avoid the term unless editorial policy shall finally compel its use; although I shall continue under obligation to discuss its relative merits, as I see them, where appropriate in my university classes.”

and again:

“[I also question] the reality of confusion alleged to result from any recent (or earlier) usages of the term ‘glaciation.’ In my own experience I have yet to find an instance of ambiguity in the use of this term. . . .

“... Introduction of a new term in any branch of science introduces an added hurdle in the path of communication with other disciplines; and in all types of Pleistocene study (I include the present here) we need the greatest freedom of communication with archeologists, soil scientists, biologists, etc. I am sure this is a gratuitous statement, but this I regard as a compelling reason to keep our terminology to a minimum. . . .”

It seems that most of the letters received favouring “glacierization” have come from people more interested in present ice-cover, whereas the weight against its use lies for the most part among “pure” geologists, some of whom may be more particularly interested in the effects of former ice invasions.

We still believe that glaciologists (if no others) need two distinct words. Take for example the sentence “X Island in the Southern Ocean is largely glaciated.” To our way of thinking this means that it shows results of former ice-cover, but, according to the interpretation of some, it can mean that it is ice-covered at present. It is difficult to see how confusion can be avoided.

We agree with Professor King that the ugly “glacierization” can often be avoided by some alternative expression. “Ice-cover,” as suggested in the original editorial note, and “ice-retreat” are useful in this connexion. More elaborate periphrasis can be very cumbersome. “Deglaciation” for retreat of ice may be too firmly entrenched to be avoided and perhaps this would not matter. We must, however, request contributors to this *Journal* who are writing about present-day ice caps or glaciers not to refer to them as “glaciations,” for this term quite clearly signifies to glaciologists the effects left on the land by vanished ice.