

The explosion of research activity in astronomy during the past ten years has greatly enlarged the opportunities for international collaboration in ways that could not have been foreseen by the founders of the IAU. As examples, I can mention joint projects for the construction and operation of ground-based telescopes in remote locations, for the instrumenting and launching of rockets and satellites, for observations by very long baseline interferometry, and for the solution of important astronomical problems by coordinated observations of a single object in widely separated regions of the spectrum. It is neither necessary nor useful for the IAU to be formally concerned with every such international program, but I hope that the structure of the Union will continue to be flexible enough to accommodate any that need to make use of its capabilities and services.

Finally, although the Executive Committee faces many important and difficult tasks before the Sixteenth General Assembly meets in Grenoble, none is more urgent than finding some way to effect the return of our colleagues from China to the IAU. On this hopeful note, I will conclude and look forward to seeing many of you in Warsaw in a few days, and all of you in France in 1976.'

22. *Closing Ceremonies.* The Chairman called upon Mr H. M. Smith to propose a comprehensive vote of thanks. Mr Smith then spoke as follows:

'It is an honour and a privilege to be called upon to express, on behalf of the participants, our thanks to all who have assisted in the organization and the smooth running of this Fifteenth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union.

This is the first occasion that a General Assembly has been held in the Southern Hemisphere, and it is a well-deserved tribute to the many valuable contributions made to astronomy by our Australian colleagues that this year we should meet in Sydney.

For some, it has been the first opportunity of seeing the Harbour, described in 1788 by an Englishman, Captain Arthur Phillip as the 'finest harbour in the world' We have also seen the famous Harbour Bridge, the exciting and controversial Opera House, the well-preserved historic houses with their 'Sydney lace' balustrades and the modern tower blocks of this vibrant, cosmopolitan capital of the State of New South Wales.

The Assembly itself has given us the opportunity of catching-up with the latest developments in our rapidly advancing branch of science; of discussing new instruments, new techniques, new programmes, the results of new theoretical studies, investigations that have led to new discoveries and of formulating new policies to deal with new problems. The invited discourses have again provided the highlights of the Assembly, while the more informal unscheduled talks have aroused lively discussion. The Commission meetings continue to be the essence of the Assembly, and I have the impression that the meetings have been animated, sometimes controversial, and generally constructive. Joint discussions have been arranged for topics that cross the boundaries of the individual Commissions.

Our thanks are due to the General Secretary, Prof. Dr C. de Jager for the immense amount of work that he has done, the Assistant Secretary, Prof. Dr G. Contopoulos – we wish him success in his endeavours to find a satisfactory solution to the difficult problem of the publication of the Reports and Transactions – the long-suffering Executive Secretary, our good friend, Dr A. Jappel and to Mrs J. Daňkova, Mlle. G. Drouin and Miss B. Reijnen for the very efficient organization of the administrative and scientific activities. Locally they have been assisted by Mr F. M. Atkinson and Mr J. Hardy. I am sure that you will agree that our IAU Secretariat have once again achieved the impossible of fitting too many meetings into too short a time, with the overriding limitation that no participant should be required to be in more than two places at the same time.

We tender our sincere thanks to our host organizations: the Australian Academy of Science and the University of Sydney. We are most appreciative of their warm and generous welcome expressed at the Inaugural Ceremony by the Foreign Secretary of the Academy, Dr J. P. Wild, the Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor W. M. O'Neil and the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Alderman David Griffin. We also express our thanks to the Minister for Science, the Honourable W. L. Morrison for attending this ceremony and for speaking to us and to the

Government of New South Wales for giving the reception for National Representatives and Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Commissions.

The University, whose excellent facilities have been so generously placed at our disposal, has as its motto the words 'Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato'. It is notoriously difficult to agree on the best translation of such mottoes. In a discussion last night one suggestion that emerged was 'The searching mind midst the changing truth'. It is open to question whether truth can change, or if it is only our conception of truth that changes. But during our stay at the University the searching minds of the members of the IAU have continued to probe into the mysteries of the Universe and we pursue the goal of the ultimate truth.

The Local Organizing Committee has performed wonders under the leadership of their genial chairman, Dr Harley Wood of Sydney Observatory. When one attends a smoothly-running and efficiently organized conference, one may not be aware of all the detailed planning that precedes the meetings and the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. Brighton is still fresh in my mind, and I know something of what is involved. All will wish to join with me in congratulating Harley on a truly magnificent effort. He has had the expert and untiring assistance of Mr A. J. Higgs as organizing secretary, Professor W. N. Christiansen who among other things took care of our musical delights, Mr A. G. Little who saw to the arrangements at the Great Hall, Mr. A. Watkinson who worked on the entertainment programme and Mr P. J. Kelly who dealt with many details in the arrangements. Let me tell them that the social functions and sightseeing trips have been much enjoyed and have provided welcome opportunities for relaxation; the traditional musical interludes at the Inaugural Ceremony were thoroughly appreciated. Our thanks would be incomplete without a mention of the charming and helpful staff of the Local Organizing Committee, Miss Sally Atkinson and her helpers, particularly Mrs Sue Gerdes, Mrs Elizabeth Ashard and Mrs Valerie Walker, who have obviously taken a delight in assisting us.

May I add a final word of thanks to the many people too numerous to mention by name who have willingly and cheerfully played their part in helping us during the past ten days or so, to the staff of the Mathematics Department of the University, who have attended to us in the Carslaw Building and to the staff of the University hostels where many participants have been accommodated. I am also sure you would like me to congratulate and thank those responsible for our daily newspaper, 'Astronomy 73'

As one who was elected to membership of this Union 35 years ago, I greatly appreciate, as I am sure that you do, the opportunities of enjoying discussions with colleagues of long-standing and of becoming acquainted with new friends. I feel that this has not only been an interesting and profitable Assembly, but a very happy and friendly occasion. Will you please join with me in thanking all those whose hard work has made it possible.

On behalf of the ladies, Mrs J. M. Greenberg addressed the Assembly as follows:

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me particular pleasure to serve as spokesman for the more than 100 women who have been so graciously and lavishly entertained as guests of the Australian Ladies Committee of this XVth General Assembly of the IAU. To each and every one of you who has worked so hard – from all of us we say a most sincere and deeply felt thank you.

From the very first moment you put us at ease and made each of us feel personally cared for. You anticipated so many of our needs in so many little thoughtful ways and then, of course, you provided us with entertainment of such choice, variety and quality that it staggers our imagination to think of the hours, days and months spent in organizing and implementing so vast an undertaking.

We are aware that no one person can do the job alone, but rather, it represents the collective effort of a dedicated group working closely and tirelessly together.

Yet each time we complimented the women of the committee on the magnificent job they have done, we would invariably be told that it would not have been possible without a chairman like Elspeth Christiansen. And indeed, it seems that this gentle, soft-spoken woman we know, would

tolerate no compromise that threatened the success or quality of this beautifully conceived program. And it occurred to me, perhaps a bit whimsically, that Mrs Christiansen may well be described much like the iron lace so unique to Sydney. For all its grace and delicacy, it has an intrinsic and enduring strength.

So once again, we compliment you and thank you all for introducing us to this most exquisitely beautiful part of your country. You have made this a memorable visit for us and we truly hope that one day we may have the opportunity to reciprocate.

Thank you.

The Chairman then called upon the retiring General Secretary, Professor C. de Jager, who spoke as follows:

'Dear Mr President, dear colleagues,

It is now many years since the General Secretaries of the IAU used to hold office during a long period: if we only remember that Fowler, Stratton and Oort held their posts during the first thirty years of the Union's life, then it is clear that some things have changed, since.

It is only three years ago that I took over this office from my friend and predecessor Luboš Perek. These three years, during which I was allowed to serve the Astronomical Community, were for me years of happiness, and at their conclusion I feel thankful to you all. The manifold relations with so many distinguished colleagues from all over our globe were a continual source of inspiration. My task was never felt as a burden, and I only hope, most sincerely, that I have been serving you well. To co-operate with you, President Bengt Strömberg, was a great experience, and the happy hours we spent with you and with Mrs Sigrid Strömberg in your hospitable home are kept in my memory as a costly treasure. Likewise the contacts with the members of the Executive Committee were always pleasant – it is rare indeed, to have the opportunity to regularly meet a group of eminent scientists, so diverse on one hand, and at the same time so homogeneous in their passion to our science.

Mr President, I just referred to Stratton, who was General Secretary for a long period. It is known that Stratton wrote all his letters himself, in long handwriting. Nowadays this would have been impossible, and without the able and diligent assistance of the Union's secretariat my work would just have been impossible.

I have greatly appreciated the co-operation with you, Dr Arnost Jappel and Mrs Jarka Dankova, both humanly as well as for the skilful and devoted way you handled the affairs of the Union. I, and my coworkers at the Astronomical Institute at Utrecht, will miss you greatly, for your personal qualities, for the friendship that has grown between us. At the same time I wish to thank you, Miss Beth Reynen, not only for having done so much for the Union, next to your task as head of the secretariat of the Utrecht Institute, but also for having been the one who thoughtfully determined and controlled my daily program – strictly, but always in a most charming way. It was you who thus enabled me still to do some scientific research, in the midst of my many obligations, to the Institute, to the Union and to other international organizations.

Not the least I thank my wife, Doetie, for her continuous moral aid, her stimulating remarks when things did not go as they should perhaps, and for allowing me to sacrifice so much of our family's time to the well-being of the Union.

And now the time has come for me to pass the torch to you, George Contopoulos. It was a good time we spent together, a time of fine and cordial co-operation during which it was partly my pleasant duty to prepare you for your new task in the chain of Secretaries of the Union. At this place I wish you all good luck, and as much pleasure in your function as I had. Thank you for the excellent spirit you showed and for the important contributions you made to the Union when you held the office of Assistant General Secretary.

Mr President, in terminating I should not conceal that it adds to my satisfaction that precisely this, so successful General Assembly, takes place on a continent where I had and have since acquired so many good friends and colleagues, in a country, once carrying the name New Holland, and where so

many of my countrymen found a second home. I hope that astronomy will continue to flourish in this country.'

The President then invited the newly elected General Secretary, Professor G. Contopoulos, to address the Assembly. Professor Contopoulos spoke as follows:

'I also want to thank all of you, Mr President, Mr General Secretary, Members of the Executive Committee, Members of the IAU, and local organizers, for your co-operation.

As the number of IAU Members increases more and more, I rely more and more on this co-operation for the success of the Union, which I want to serve not only as a Scientific Organization, but also as a big family.

During the General Assembly many new friendships were formed. I am sure that these friendships will continue and develop, and that we will see each other again at the next General Assembly. Thus I wish you a happy return home and 'Au revoir à Grenoble'?

The Chairman then closed the meeting around noon with the following words:

'I thank you for your attendance, and I wish you all a happy return home. I hereby formally declare the fifteenth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union closed.'