

## PREFACE

The changing character of the IAU General Assemblies becomes most clear from a comparison of the agenda of the Brighton meeting with that of one of the earlier meetings. The fourth General Assembly (Cambridge Mass., 1932) had about 240 participants, registered guests included, the Brighton meeting had about 2300 people attending. The Cambridge meeting lasted 5½ working days, of which, however, three half days were exclusively devoted to excursions, leaving four real meeting days. At that time the nearly 30 commissions had each only one meeting, during part of a morning or afternoon; some commissions did not meet at all. There was one public lecture, by Sir Arthur Eddington, on 'The Expanding Universe'. Most of the small European countries were represented by two or three delegates only, but the delegations of France and Great Britain were composed of 20 and 18 scientists respectively; at that time there were only two delegates from Germany.

After the Brighton General Assembly, with about 200 commission meetings – one commission met eleven times! – six Joint Discussions, four Invited Discourses, a Special Meeting and hardly time for excursions, there were a few complaints about too many overlapping meetings. In my opinion this reflects the encouraging intensity and sparkling tension of the modern General Assemblies and of astronomical life in general! In organizing future General Assemblies utmost care will be taken, of course, to possibly avoid overlap of meetings, and to secure enough time for discussions, but a simple computation shows that with 2400 participants, ten meeting rooms, and 8 meeting days there will be an average speaking time of 12 minutes per participant! This explains the tendency, nowadays, of shifting the very detailed specialist discussions towards the symposia and colloquia which more and more tend to cluster around the General Assemblies – there were *eleven* such meetings scattered in time and place around the Brighton General Assembly. This tendency will certainly continue.

The present volume, *Transactions XIVB*, contains the report of the Executive Committee for the triennial period 1967–69; the reports of the Inaugural Ceremony and the General Assembly at Brighton, the reports of the Commission Meetings, and further what is customary called the Astronomer's Handbook; the most important part of that section is the new Statutes, By-laws and Working Rules of the Union, as accepted at the XIVth General Assembly. We found it also necessary to publish a new version of our Style Book which has changed in several respects after its first publication in 1966. Finally there are the usual lists of commission officers and members, and the general list of Union members.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to miss G. Drouin for translating various parts of this volume into French.

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*General Secretary*