



PART 2

WELCOMING CEREMONY



REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY



## WELCOMING CEREMONY

Wednesday, 22 August at 20<sup>h</sup>

The Welcoming Ceremony of the XVth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union took place in the Sydney Town Hall, in the presence of a distinguished gathering of representatives of the Government of Australia, the Town of Sydney, the University of Sydney, the Australian Academy of Science, The National Organizing Committee, and other organizations.

Dr H.W. Wood, Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee, acted as chairman for the ceremony.

After a few words of welcome to Members and guests, the Chairman called upon His Excellency, the Honourable W.L. Morrison, Minister for Science, to address the Assembly.

### ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE, THE HONOURABLE W. L. MORRISON

‘On behalf of the Government of Australia I am very pleased to welcome members of the International Astronomical Union to our country on the first occasion when an Assembly has been held in the Southern Hemisphere. I understand that the possibility of holding an Assembly here was first mentioned by a President of the Union in 1954 and that the moves which have led to your being here at present began in 1957.

The field of Astronomy has one of the longest and most continuous histories of international cooperation of which there are many examples before the foundation of the Union which was one of the earliest of the international scientific unions to be founded in 1919. The success of your Union is based on the promotion of cooperation and especially the formation of informal and personal relationships among astronomers.

This is not the first time by any means that Australia has been discovered astronomically. The main purpose of the voyage of James Cook was to observe the transit of Venus across the Sun from Tahiti in 1770 and incidentally this was a participation in an early example of international cooperation in science. Thus Cook’s exploration of the east coast of Australia was incidental to a mission designed for astronomical studies.

The establishment of the penal colony in Sydney in 1788 has also an astronomical association. Second Lieutenant Dawes was to establish a station from which to observe the return of a periodic comet. Although he was unsuccessful in this, he played an important part in the exploration and survey of the Sydney area.

It is interesting that to finance Cook’s voyage the Crown gave a Royal Grant of £4,000 while Sir Joseph Banks assisted by providing £10,000 from his own private resources. The balance between national and private funding for international science has long since been reversed.

Recognising the natural advantage that Australia has because of its location in the Southern Hemisphere, Australian Governments have given substantial support to astronomy both optical and radio. Our latest project, in cooperation with the Government of the United Kingdom, is the 3.8 metre Anglo-Australian telescope. I am very pleased with the Australian participation in this project and by this time next year the telescope will be formally opened and in operation.

In the funding of big sciences, such as astronomy, there are clear reasons for greater international cooperation and for development of facilities and the use of equipment on a multi-user basis. The Australian national objectives for astronomical research are directed towards continuing investiga-

tions in the areas of astronomy where we have demonstrated scientific excellence in the past or for which we have particular geographic advantage.

As a politician I must confess that there must be few votes to be gained from the pioneering work being done in Australia in chemistry of the Galaxy, but as an individual I am fascinated and intrigued by the significance of the new molecules discovered in interstellar space. The cooperation between the Division of Radiophysics of CSIRO and the Chemistry Department of Monash University in this work represents an interdisciplinary approach that is becoming so much a part of modern astronomy.

In Australia we have been interested in several active areas of astronomy, in quasars and their cosmological significance, in the nature of pulsars and in the physics of the Sun, including the basic nature of solar flares, high energy phenomena in the solar corona and in the behaviour and time changes of structures of all sizes in the solar atmosphere.

Mr President on behalf of the Government of Australia I wish the Assembly great success and after the words of the poet Milton shall now leave you "to model Heaven and calculate the stars; how they will wield the mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive".

Dr Wood expressed his thanks to Minister Morrison, and invited the Right Honourable, the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Alderman David Griffin, C.B.E., to address the gathering.

ADDRESS BY THE LORD MAYOR OF SYDNEY, ALDERMAN D. GRIFFIN, C.B.E.

'Mr Chairman, Mr Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a signal honour – perhaps in this company I should say an honour of the first magnitude – to welcome to Sydney for the first time members of the International Astronomical Union. Australia is no stranger to unions; already we have many – too many perhaps – and some may be asking why in heaven is the Lord Mayor welcoming still another. We welcome you, Mr President, partly because your union is closer to heaven than most, but mainly because yours is a most special union: You work not in your own interest, but in the interest of mankind. You strive not for better conditions, but for greater knowledge. Your studies throughout all ages of history reveal man at the highest point of his intellectual achievement. You are, it seems to me, the poets of science since you use your love romance to lead you to the truth. Sydney is honoured to be your host in this your first sally into the Southern Hemisphere.

Having thus established your credentials permit me to say a word about mine. The fact is that as Lord Mayor I am something of an old time astronomer myself. I am no heretic, I run no risk of being burnt at the stake, I hold fast to one demonstrably accurate astronomical proposition, namely that Sydney is the centre of the Earth. All other countries and peoples revolve around Sydney. The Lord Mayor is the centre of Sydney, therefore the Lord Mayor is at the centre of the centre of the Earth. It is an awfully pleasant place in which to be. Some minor figures have occasionally been ill-mannered enough to challenge this proposition. They are a doubting lot!

But perhaps I have over-simplified it a little. The Lord Mayor has other extraordinary qualities. Let me, for example, explain his position in relation to energy and radiation. One starts with the simple proposition that a Lord Mayor gives off energy in the form of radiation – indeed I hope I am giving off some energy in the form of radiation at this very minute – yet, and here is the mystery, my mass is not diminishing. Einstein, by applying the Lorentz transformations, equated the relation between mass and radiation. Yet for all his genius he arrived at a wrong conclusion. His principle simply does not work when applied to a Lord Mayor. For Einstein postulated, if I remember correctly, that if a body gives off energy in the form of radiation its mass diminishes by  $E/c^2$  where  $c$  is the velocity of light. True, Lord Mayors sometimes have to move pretty quickly but under no circumstances does their mass diminish. On the contrary, a Lord Mayor finds his mass increasing (He wishes it didn't) in direct proportion to the amount of radiation he gives off. Nevertheless, and with all its attendant risks, I am radiating to you all to-night the warmest of welcomes to Sydney!