

puzzled by his style of thought, his equipment and his discoveries. I must confess that as a non-astronomer, I feel more at ease reading about what Naburiannu, Kidinnu, Eudoxos, Hipparchos and Ptolemaeus were working on than I do in reading about quasars, pulsars, black holes, 21 cm frequencies, radiation pressures, electron streams and so on. Astronomy is a very old science but it has come a long way. May Astronomy go a little further as a result, direct or indirect, of your meetings in Sydney.'

Dr Wood expressed his thanks to Professor O'Neil for his address, and invited Professor Dr G. P. Wild, Australian Academy of Science, to speak.

ADDRESS BY PROF. DR G. P. WILD, AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

'Mr Chairman, My Lord Mayor, Mr President, Mr Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Australian Academy of Science, it is my very great pleasure to welcome you here on the occasion of the 15th General Assembly of the IAU.

I hope that in the coming days, besides meeting old and new friends, everyone of you derives new creative ideas and inspiration not only in the meeting room but perhaps more importantly from informal discussions while sipping coffee (or some other fluid). Welcome especially to the younger astronomers attending their first meeting; and perhaps at the other end of the scale we could extend a special welcome to the one astronomer with us who has been to every meeting since the Union began – that is, every astronomer's friend, Professor Jan Oort.

The President of our Academy, Sir Rutherford Robertson, would of course have been with us himself tonight had he not been out of the country, but he has specifically asked me to convey to you, Professor Strömgren, and to all participants his very good wishes and the sense of honour he feels that the General Assembly should be held in Australia. (Little did he know what a tussle it was.)

Academies of Science vary quite a lot from one country to another. In Australia's case the Academy is a body of scientists whose operations are quite independent of those of the government of the day, although it is of course dependent on the general goodwill of governments for financial support. One of the responsibilities decreed to the Academy by its Charter is 'to establish and maintain associations and relations between Australian scientists and the International Scientific Unions' For the present General Assembly, therefore, the Academy has been the formal interface between the IAU and the host country. That is why I, as Foreign Secretary of the Academy, am on this platform tonight. (Not only tonight; in the words of the American mathematician Tom Lehrer, 'Come back tomorrow night, we're going to do fractions'.)

But tonight I promise not to keep you long at all. It is on occasions such as this that I do well to remember the famous story of Laplace, who once wrote profoundly and at very great length on a certain scientific topic. He finished by apologizing for writing so long a paper. 'Had I had time', he said, 'I would have written a short one'.

Mr Chairman, as I survey this gathering of people, one rather macabre thought occurs to me: perhaps never again am I likely to see such a strong concentration of people whose internal biological clocks are in such a state of complete disarray. (I hasten to say there is no outward evidence of it). To those of you who have travelled half way round the world to come and visit us, may I say thank you for being prepared to put up with this temporary inconvenience and assure you that in a few days all will be well. And thank you also for sacrificing part of your August for the equivalent of part of February. Although we are unable to supply you with summertime our orchestra will do its best with the next item by Vivaldi. Finally I hope those of you who find yourself so far south for the first time will find abiding compensation when you have the chance of getting away from the city lights to see our most treasured possession (the Lord Mayor excepted) – the southern sky: the Clouds of Magellan, the Southern Cross, and the sight of Sagittarius in the Zenith.

Ladies and Gentlemen, once again, welcome to the Southern Hemisphere, and welcome to Australia.'