

General discussion: Session III

Joint chairmen: R.O. Vicente, Dr G.A. Wilkins

R.O. Vicente drew attention to the completion by the International Latitude Observatory of a retrospective analysis of International Latitude Service data, and proposed Resolution 1. The resolution was adopted.

The Symposium also adopted Resolution 2, calling for the appointment of a working group to evaluate new techniques and make recommendations for a new international programme. The hope was expressed that information would be exchanged between this and other working groups, for example that of COSPAR on lunar laser ranging.

No further action was taken concerning the adopted position of the pole; it was stated that the almanac offices would need nutation terms by 1980 in order that these could be incorporated in the almanac for 1984, and that ideas or comments should be made known to P.K. Seidelmann at USNO.

The final subject discussed was the desirability of merging Commissions 19 and 31, which had jointly sponsored the Symposium. The discussion was held at the request of J.D. Mulholland, seconded by K. Johnston. They stated that several members of the IAU having astronomical interests both within and outside the fields of these two commissions were unable to be members of both because of the overall restriction to membership of not more than 3 commissions; information was consequently not reaching all to whom it was of interest. There was already a large common membership and many meetings were arranged jointly. It was believed that mergers between other commissions were being considered for similar reasons.

Other speakers stated that the possibility of a merger had been considered previously and rejected, although it might justifiably be held that circumstances had changed; in particular, atomic time was now widely accessible and coordination procedures had been established. The problems considered by the two commissions were, however, quite different and the quality of technical decisions would not be improved

by merging. There were, moreover, other interests, notably those of the standards laboratories, which ought to be represented in Commission 31; it would be more difficult to accommodate them in a merged commission.

After further discussion a motion requesting both Commissions to conduct polls of their members on the subject of a possible merger, and to make the results of the polls known at the General Assembly in Montreal, was rejected by 25 votes to 16.