

OPENING ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR J.H. OORT

On behalf of the Organizing Committee I express a warm welcome to all participants. I hope you will find a favourable sphere to promote your discussions. I also hope the atmosphere will favour you on your sailing trip to the lakes.

As regards the sphere The Netherlands have a long and fruitful tradition in galactic research. As regards the atmosphere the tradition is more uncertain. We just hope for a rainless day with a fresh breeze.

Today's inauguration makes thoughts go back to the time when the International Astronomical Union for the first time organized a symposium. This was in 1953. Like our present symposium it took place in The Netherlands, on an estate near Groningen, and like the present its topic was the structure of the Galaxy, in fact on "Co-ordination of Galactic Research". That meeting was much cosier, almost a family gathering, with no more than 28, invited, participants. But it initiated an important new development in the I.A.U.

The second symposium, organized in the same year, this time in combination with the Union of Theoretical and Applied Dynamics, was on "Gas Dynamics of Cosmic Clouds" and thus came still closer to our present meeting. Among the participants were the physicist J.M. Burgers, from Delft, von Weizsäcker, Ludwig Biermann, Hoyle, Gold and such dynamic celebrities as von Kármán. The published account, edited by Van de Hulst, has been widely read and consulted.

Among the many topics that will be discussed there is one to which I would like to draw special attention, namely the ionization of hydrogen in dark clouds. This may lead to an unexpected new insight as will be explained by Dr. Sciama.

I wish that the present symposium may become equally inspiring as these two predecessors.

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