

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

PLANETARY SECTION

Bulletin No. 1

October 25, 1961.

Some weeks ago you received a bulletin concerning the Standing Committee on Observational Activities. I have been appointed National Co-ordinator for planetary observations and would like in the present bulletin to describe the plans for my section.

Planetary observations cover a wide range of interests and I can say from personal experience that they are highly rewarding. A 3-inch telescope is about the smallest that allows useful work to be done; a 6- or 8-inch is much better, and, with the active telescope-making groups in many of our Centres, such telescopes must be fairly common. Most amateur observations take the form of pencil sketches of the planets' disks as seen through the telescope. Although it can be said that with sufficient practice almost anyone can wield a pencil well enough to make a drawing of scientific use, those less artistically inclined might find interest in other equally valuable methods such as photography, transit work, timing of satellite phenomena, etc.

I am aware that some Centres are engaged in planetary work to various extents at present, but my knowledge is mostly second-hand and hence rather spotty. Thus I would very much like to hear from every Centre before adopting any particular system for recording and submitting observations. Since the essence of the National Programme is the exchange of data, what better way to start than by pooling our accumulated experience to date. This should not deter a Centre which has done little or no planetary work in the past, since its inquiries will indicate the difficulties existing. In particular, I am anxious to know what work has been done on Jupiter during the current apparition in order that a report can be prepared for the Journal.

It is my hope that eventually all sixteen Centres will participate in the section's work. The large extent of our membership in longitude should be invaluable in maintaining a more complete coverage of our neighbour worlds. I look forward to hearing from your Centre in the near future.

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