

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

STANDING COMMITTEE ON OBSERVATIONAL ACTIVITIES

FROM NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

Bulletin No. 4

In this, my first bulletin as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Observational Activities, it seems appropriate to restate the purpose of the Committee and to review the progress that has been made to date.

The Committee has three main objectives:-

1. To keep members informed of the observational activities of all Centres.
2. To give help and encouragement to the Centres in developing observational programmes.
3. To develop, ultimately, programmes of definite scientific value in which the experienced amateur can participate.

With sixteen widely separated Centres from Halifax to Victoria, communication has always been a major problem. Prior to 1958 we were hardly aware of each other's existence, for few members from outside of Toronto attended the Society's Annual Meeting and At-Home, held always in Toronto on a Friday evening in late winter. Then the suggestion was made that every alternate year the Annual Meeting be held outside of Toronto, and the Hamilton Centre was host in 1958. The following year the Annual Meeting, held again in Toronto, was expanded into a two-day event with a paper session. In Montreal in 1960 there was the first display of observational work, and discussion groups held at that time led to the formation of the Standing Committee on Observational Activities the following year.

The Standing Committee is composed of the Chairman and three members and the National Co-ordinator of each of the observing disciplines. While it was decided that all observations could be classified under ten main observing disciplines, it was agreed that these should be introduced one or two at a time. At present there are National Co-ordinators for six disciplines, as shown on the attached list. Admittedly, these have not all been as active as we would have wished but we have gained experience and I am confident that we are now ready for another step forward.

Our efforts are now being directed towards issuing bulletins at regular intervals. It is believed that the duplicating and mailing of the bulletins, formerly the responsibility of the Co-ordinators, can be handled more efficiently by the National Office. It is therefore planned to have mailings through the National Office three or four times a year, each mailing to include the bulletin of any Co-ordinator who has material ready at that time. With this bulletin you will also receive bulletins from the Co-ordinators of the Aurora Section and the Comet and Nova Section.

Communication continues to be a problem. No matter how many bulletins we write, they are useless unless we get them into the hands of the right people. It is not practicable to send copies to all members of the Society but a wider distribution than heretofore will be possible under the new system. Several "key" members of each Centre will receive copies, and we ask everyone receiving a bulletin to make a special effort to bring it to the attention of any members who might be interested.

Communication is a two-way street. Were there no response from the Centres, the Co-ordinators would soon have nothing to write about. The paper sessions and exhibits that are now a part of every General Assembly indicate that there is plenty of enthusiasm all across the country. From the exhibit in Toronto last May we know that the Ottawa Centre

has done considerable astrophotography, that the Hamilton Centre is interested in meteor observing and telescope making, that Winnipeg, with its own small observatory, is making lunar and planetary observations, that le Centre Francais de Montreal made extensive observations of the December 1964 lunar eclipse, that Edmonton is giving its full support to a project for a municipal observatory, that Calgary is excited about its city's project for a planetarium, that the expansion of the Department of Astronomy of the University of Western Ontario has stimulated the interest of the London Centre. (This list is not intended to be complete but only to indicate the interest that exists.)

However, not all of the Centres have been reporting on their activities to the National Co-ordinators. We would like to know what you are doing in every field of observation. Your report need not go into much detail. If your observations are of a casual nature, a general statement to that effect would be sufficient. If you are making observations in a field for which a National Co-ordinator has not yet been appointed, send your report to the Chairman of the Standing Committee. Similarly, if you want help in a field for which there is no Co-ordinator, write to the Chairman:

We are still a long way from attaining our objectives but we have come a long way since 1958. We are eager to help you in any way we can, and with your co-operation the Standing Committee could become a vital force within our Society.

National Co-ordinators

Aurora	- Dr. Earl Milton, 2 Spence Street, Apt.12, Regina, Sask.
Comet & Nova	- Jim Low, 108 Roy Avenue, Apt.102, Dorval, Que.
Lunar	- A.L. Ostrander, 75 Rabbit Lane, Islington, Ont.
Meteors	- S.A. Mott, 2049 Honeywell Avenue, Ottawa 13, Ont.
Planetary	- G. Gaherty, 2800 Hill Park Road, Montreal 25, Que.
Variable Stars	- T. Dickinson, 16 Palamar Road, Downsview, Ont.

Isabel K. Williamson, Chairman,
Standing Committee on
Observational Activities,
5162 Belmore Avenue,
Montreal 29, Quebec.