

during the war; the administrative office has been moved to Trinity College, Cambridge, and it is probable that the meetings of the society will be held in that town.

THE celebration of the centenary of the Royal Microscopical Society in October has been postponed. It may be found necessary for the time being to curtail the number of ordinary meetings normally held in

London during the session. Arrangements are being made to continue publication of the society's journal as usual.

THE new mechanical parts plant of the Spencer Lens Company was opened formally on October 26. The operations of each department were demonstrated, and there was an exhibit of scientific optical instruments.

DISCUSSION

THE WAR AND *CHRONICA BOTANICA*

THE impact of the European war on science has already been felt in the United States through the cancellation of foreign subscriptions to American scientific journals and to services like *Biological Abstracts*. The same is true in other neutral nations as well as among the belligerents, no doubt. An obligation rests upon every scientific society and association in this country to consider the effects of the war situation and to join forces in preserving, as far as may be possible, essential scientific publishing and abstracting services until normal conditions return.

A colleague permits the writer to quote from a letter from the editor of *Chronica Botanica*, the international plant science news-magazine. The letter is signed by Dr. Frans Verdoorn, who writes in September from Leiden, Holland (Postoffice Box 8) as follows:

The present war which is expected to be a lengthy one makes it impossible for me to continue *Chronica Botanica*. About a fortnight ago my morning mail dropped from about 60 pieces to 12 and hardly any information or money is being received. I can still finish this year's *Chronica* and am doing so, but that will be all. This country of course is neutral and there is a fair chance that it will remain so, but that does not help me much as I am wholly dependent on information and subscriptions from countries now in war, from which I do not hear anything.

My wife and I gave 5 years to building up the *Chronica* and we are in great distress that we should have to stop it. And I will have to do so as the post which I will have to accept under the circumstances in the very near future, is in Java, . . . but one can not do any international work there. It is out of question to continue the *Chronica* there.

I feel, however, that it would be possible to continue the *Chronica* in some form in the States. Even if the States would be involved in a war, I could continue it there with the aid of North and South American editors, and it would still remain self-supporting. But I would need some kind of post for my own living, as—at least during the war—there will be hardly any profits on the *Chronica*. . . .

Even if I had a minor post to start with, I would be able to continue my *Chronica* in the States during the war, and that is the only thing that matters at present.

I am asking this not on behalf of myself, as there are for me personally suitable posts, but on behalf of the

Chronica which during the past year has become a symbol to its 2,000 readers, a symbol of good will and cooperation, which I am most anxious to continue.

Any suggestions which may disclose possibilities for the continuance of *Chronica Botanica* should be sent immediately to Dr. Frans Verdoorn, Editor, *Chronica Botanica*, P. O. Box 8, Leiden, Holland. Dr. Verdoorn's ability as a plant scientist is widely recognized and the unique editorial services he has rendered to his professional colleagues all over the world through the medium of *Chronica Botanica* are deeply appreciated. It would be a permanent international scientific loss if *Chronica Botanica* should be forced to suspend on account of the war. Is there not a way out?

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REMARKS ON THE CENTER OF POPULATION

THIS note is written to draw attention to an erroneous statement made at the end of the paper on "Centers of Population of Learned Groups," by C. B. Read.¹

In the paper referred to the center of a population the n members of which have rectangular coordinates (x_i, y_i) , $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$, is defined as the point with coordinates

$$x = \frac{\sum x_i}{n} \qquad y = \frac{\sum y_i}{n}$$

that is, the point (x, y) is the center of gravity of the distribution. A statement is made implying that the sum of the distances of the members from this point is minimum. This is not true in general; (x, y) is the point for which the sum of the *squares* of the distances is minimum.

The distinction is clear in the special case of a population distributed on a straight line. The mean point is the center of population as here defined, while the median, a point such that the same number of members lie on each side of it, has the property that the sum of the distances from it is minimum. These points do not in general coincide; for many distributions the median is between the mean and a point of greatest population density, the mode. As a definite example consider the seven points having coordinates 0, 1, 2, 3,

¹ SCIENCE, 90: 61-63, July 21, 1939.