

## Comments and Communications

### Otto Struve on the Freedom of Science

As retiring president, Otto Struve addressed the American Astronomical Society at its meeting in Tucson, Arizona last December. His opening remarks, from which excerpts are quoted here, have far-reaching implications for all scientists:

The American Astronomical Society has increased greatly in stature and in membership since its beginning in 1897. . . . We now face problems which were unknown to our predecessors; to cope with them we shall need to draw upon the combined wisdom, experience, and good will of all the members of our Society. . . . The three years of my presidency have been a period of postwar reconstruction in astronomy and reappraisal of our efforts. As physical scientists we are affected by the soul-searching doubts of the atomic scientists, and as the representatives of the most international among the sciences we are disturbed by the growth of narrow nationalism in science. Political considerations unknown to our founders and abhorred by our immediate predecessors have been thrust upon us by those who wish to make of science a tool for advancing their own ideologies. Some of the developments represent real dangers, and I should like to direct the attention of the society and of our new president to three issues:

The first danger comes from without. Recently, attacks made upon us by astronomers of the Soviet Union, combined with boastful assurances of their own preeminence, have filled many of our members with deep concern. We are portrayed as ruthless stooges of a capitalistic conspiracy to enslave the world, who deal out incorrect scientific information in order "to prove the futility of life on earth and to disarm the will of the people to change the existing order." We are accused of medieval faith and an "idealistic" outlook by those who profess to serve only the dictates of pure materialism.

The second danger comes from within. It is disheartening that a famous foreign astronomer who was invited to work at an American observatory was refused a visa by our State Department without any explanation of its action to the institution that invited him. By acts of this nature, the interests of science are defeated, American prestige is lowered, a potential friend of our democracy may very well have been turned into an enemy, and a suspicion is created that political attempts to control scientific thought are not all confined to countries on the other side of the Atlantic.

The third danger lies within ourselves. It is all too easy, step by step, to relinquish our freedom of scientific inquiry and to surrender to political powers our right to control our thought. Fear of political persecution and of social ostracism are cropping up in unexpected places. We must remain united as never before; we must not allow our differences to blind us to the dangers I have referred to. We should reaffirm our belief in the freedom of science.

The full text of Dr. Struve's address was published in the January issue of *Popular Astronomy*.

COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY  
C. M. HUFFER, SECRETARY

Washburn Observatory  
Madison, Wisconsin

### Unesco and the IUPAP

Marcel Schein's report on the Como Conference on Cosmic Radiation (*Science*, 1950, 111, 16) states:

The conference was organized by the Italian Physical Society, under the sponsorship of the International Union of Physics (Unesco) whose president, H. A. Kramers (Holland), originally suggested the idea of holding an International Colloquium on Cosmic Rays this year.

This statement seems to indicate that the International Union of Physics is a part of Unesco. Since such a misunderstanding occurs quite often, I should like to take this opportunity to make clear the relation between Unesco and the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics.

The International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) is an independent international nongovernmental scientific organization. It has been federated in the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) ever since this council was organized in 1931. Besides IUPAP, nine other unions (in the following fields of science: astronomy, scientific radio, crystallography, theoretical and applied mechanics, pure and applied chemistry, geography, geodesy and geophysics, biological sciences, and history of science) are federated in ICSU. The council signed a formal agreement with Unesco in December 1946, under the terms of which the council and its unions on one hand, and Unesco on the other, consult each other on and render help to each other in matters concerning international cooperation in the field of basic sciences. The formal agreement makes the council, its unions, and their subsidiary organizations eligible for grants-in-aid from Unesco. However, the council, its unions and their subsidiary organizations are independent organizations which do not form part of Unesco.

In the case of the International Symposium on Cosmic Rays, which was held at Como last year, and also in that of the International Symposium on Nuclear Physics which preceded the Symposium on Cosmic Radiation, Unesco allocated the following grants-in-aid to IUPAP: for the Symposium on Cosmic Rays—transportation expenses, 14 persons, \$1,850; publications, \$400; for the Symposium on Nuclear Forces—transportation expenses, 10 persons, \$2,150; publications, \$400.

P. AUGER

Director, Department of Natural Sciences,  
Unesco, Paris

### Correction

The article "Antifolliculoid Activity of Vitamin A" (Kahn, Raymond H. and Bern, Howard A., *Science*, 1950, 111, 516) contains an error. The words ". . . and inactivate," at the end of the first line, paragraph 2, p. 516, should be deleted.

HOWARD A. BERN

University of California