

8th November 1924.

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Dear Mr. Long,

I am forwarding a proposed draft report of the Committee appointed by the Council of the Astronomical Society to consider the question of the formation of a National Committee in Astronomy in South Africa. A copy of Mr. Innes' letter to Mr. Houghton with his proposals is also enclosed for consideration in connection with this draft report.

I shall be glad if you will inform me of any alterations in or additions to the report which you consider should be made, particularly as regards the size and constitution of the Committee, so that a final report can be prepared at an early date for submission to the Council.

Yours very sincerely,

B. Gencer Jones

Mr. E. Long, Esq.,

"Carnarvon",

Walleston Road,

HOWBRAY.

also sent to Mr Reid

The International Astronomical Union was founded with the following objects; as stated in the Statutes of Convention of the Union :-

- (1) To facilitate the relations between Astronomers of different countries where international co-operation is necessary or useful.
- (2) To promote the study of astronomy in all its departments

South Africa became a member of the Union in 1922, the adhering organisation being the Union Government. The adhering organisation in any country belonging to the Union is responsible for the payment of the contribution due from that country towards the expenses of the Union - for publications, forwarding international projects etc.

The statutes of the Union provide that a National Committee shall be formed in each of the countries adhering to the Union, such committee being formed under the responsibility of the principal Academy of the country concerned, or of its National Research Council or of some other national institution or association of institutions or of its government. It should be noted that the Committee need not necessarily be formed under the responsibility of the organisation adhering to the Union in the particular country.

The part assigned to these Committees is (i) the promotion and coordination of astronomical work in the respective countries, more especially in relation to their international requirements; (ii) the nomination of delegates to represent them at the meetings of the Union; (iii) the proposal of questions for discussion by the Union. They are also empowered to propose singly or jointly with other National Committees, questions falling within the purview of the Union, for discussion by the Union.

The formation of a National Committee in Astronomy in South Africa is desirable for the purposes specified above. Two alternatives are open: that the National Committee should be formed under the responsibility of the Royal Society (as the principal Academy in South Africa), or of the Government.

In considering these two alternatives, it should be remembered that the principal Observatory in South Africa is not a Union Government Observatory and further that it is probable that two American Observatories will shortly be established in South Africa. If the National Committee is formed under the responsibility of the Government, there may be objections to these institutions being represented on the Committee, although without them the Committee would fail in its main purpose - the promotion and coordination of astronomical work in South Africa.

It would therefore seem preferable that the National Committee should be formed under the responsibility of the Royal Society. There would then be no objection to . . . astronomer or any members of the staffs of the Royal Observatory or the American Observatories being members of the Committee.

The Union Astronomer states that he "would also like to see H. M. Astronomer on the 1st. Ast. Com. as a courtesy member, entitled (and invited) to take part in our deliberations but not entitled to vote - this for obvious reasons".

The "obvious reasons" are not apparent, bearing in mind the part assigned to the Committee. The National Committee has no power to commit the Government of South Africa to expenditure of any sort - though it would be within its power, as promoting astronomical work in the Country, to support an application from the Union Astronomer for assistance in any international project.

Unless H. M. Astronomer is a member of the National Committee (and not merely a courtesy member) it is difficult to see how the Committee could fulfil its part in coordinating astronomical work in South Africa.

It is therefore suggested that the Royal Society should be approached with a view to the formation of a National Committee in Astronomy, and it is suggested that the composition of the committee might be :-

Ex-officio - Union Astronomer: - E.H. Astronomer:

" Director of the Trigonometrical Survey
(or representative).

Nominated by the Royal Society - Three members.

" " " S.A. Association - Three members.
for the Advance
-ment of Science

" " " Astronomical - Six members.
Society.

The nominations would be for a period of three years, 4 retiring each year in order to secure continuity. In the first instance there would be 4 nominations for a period of one year, 4 for a period of two years and 4 for a period of three years. Special representation is not given to the American Observatories, but it would be desirable that one representative from each of these observatories should be nominated to serve on the Committee.