



• La Silla
• La Serena
• Santiago

• Munich

No. 29 – September 1982

The Users Committee – Where the Grassroots Talk

G. Lyngå, Lund Observatory, Chairman of the UC

Once a year, a sunny day in May, the Users Committee meets. Each national representative has from his colleagues at home brought a long list of complaints, suggestions and expressions of gratitude to ESO.

A number of ESO staff members devote the day listening and supplying information to them. The Director General, the Director in Chile, sometimes the head of the TRS, the head of the visiting astronomers office and several of the leading astronomers and engineers are present.

The agenda starts with a report by the Director General: Status of major telescope projects, future instrumentation and such matters. Then the Director in Chile and the head of the TRS describe the present condition of the instruments, the problems that have already appeared and those to be expected. These items are then open for discussion by the UC.

After this, the representatives of the various member countries present their points on different details of the La Silla activities, and also on the visitors facilities at Garching. Subjects debated concern calibration of equipment, information or lack of information about observing routines, logistics, etc. It is gratifying to note the good spirit in which reasonable criticism is accepted by the

ESO staff. Often ESO can meet the demands, and at other times a compromise can be reached. If a certain point cannot be resolved, it is the task of the national representative to return that information to the colleague who raised the point. In all cases the airing of opinions is felt to be useful.

Sometimes the agenda contains special points which are of immediate concern. Last May we discussed the importance of astronomical staff on La Silla. Users and ESO representatives agreed about the essential function that is filled by staff astronomers who, for the benefit of their own research, take part in the development of state-of-the-art equipment. It was also pointed out that the staff astronomer is in a much better position than the visitor to detect the malfunctioning of instruments or telescopes.

The Users Committee is not only a safety valve for disgruntled visiting astronomers. It is also a fruitful collaborative effort where the ESO staff and the observers' representatives meet, talk and listen to one another.

The Metal Content of Magellanic Cloud Cepheids

J. W. Pel, Kapteyn Astronomical Institute, Groningen, the Netherlands

Introduction

Ever since 1912, when Miss Leavitt discovered the famous period-luminosity law for Cepheids in the Magellanic Clouds, the Clouds have played a central role in the study of these important and fascinating pulsating stars.

Professor M. K. V. Bappu, 1927–1982

It is in the deepest sorrow that we have to announce the untimely death of Prof. M. K. V. Bappu, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore, and President of the International Astronomical Union. He passed away in Munich, on August 19, 1982, during a visit to ESO, following complications after major heart surgery. An obituary will follow in the next issue of the *Messenger*.