In this issue

Jan Oort

We publish a set of articles (page 123 to 147) in honour of Jan Oort who is considered by consensus as undoubtedly the greatest astronomer of this century. He died on the 5th of November 1992 at the age of 92 and his obituary appears on page 131. He was a man of vision and many of the papers he wrote in the distant past are still considered contemporary.

During my visit to Leiden in 1955, I went to the Physics Laboratory, saw the stained glass window set up in honour of Peter Zeeman, as also the laboratories of Kammerlingh Onnes where history was made in the field of low temperature physics. I could also see the dome of the Leiden Astronomical Laboratory. My Dutch friend who was taking me round asked me whether I would like to meet Jan Oort. To my utter shame I did not know who Oort was—this too after the discovery of the 21 cm hydrogen line which completely changed the face of radio astronomy (see page 134). In the mid-seventies (when I was a bit more educated), I did meet him. I was almost dumbstruck to see this colossus who started lines of research which changed the very direction of astronomical thinking. We briefly discussed how Holland could produce some of the greatest painters and scientists. How such a tiny country could lead in so many fields like low temperature physics, X-ray crystallography, radio astronomy and technology. We also talked of the agony of the Dutch during the German occupation.

At Westerbork, there was a Nazi concentration camp where many Dutch scientists were tortured and killed. Oort choose the same piece of land to build his magnificent array of telescopes so that man could (to use his expression), ‘Look forward in wonder’ at the universe. Now this place will not be remembered as one symbolizing man’s inhumanity to man, but one from where man pursues unity and understanding, seeking them through science in space.

The Crab Nebula

A problem that interested Jan Oort strongly for a number of reasons and to which he directed the attention of his students and colleagues is that of the Crab Nebula. It hardly needs mentioning how many and diverse the consequences of the observations and theoretical studies of this supernova remnant have proved to be. Oort has also been personally involved in it—from its identification with the guest star of 1054 (in 1942), to the study of its polarization (1953), its composition (1956) and its radiation mechanism (1957). One cannot also forget his beautiful article in Scientific American. It is therefore fitting that in the same issue we publish the text of a lecture on the Crab Nebula by Lo Woltjer (one of Oort’s very distinguished students) delivered in Bangalore (page 123).
SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695 011

Applications are invited for the post of DIRECTOR who will be the Chief Executive Officer of the above Institute. The Institute, a body corporate, is an Institution of National Importance under the Ministry of Science and Technology and has the status of a University.

The Institute has currently a 200 bed modern speciality hospital for cardiology and neurology and a series of interlinked laboratories for the development of biomedical materials and devices on its Technology campus in Thiruvandum. The hospital has strong supportive programmes in anaesthesiology, biochemistry, pathology and radiology. It also offers post-graduate programmes leading to the award of degrees such as DM, M Ch and Ph.D. The Institute has a total staff of 800 including the faculty.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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(2) Post-graduate qualification such as MD, MS, DM, M Ch., MRCP, FRCC, FRCS (C) or American Speciality Board Certification in any one of the specialities of interest to the Institute.
(3) Teaching and/or research experience of not less than 12 years in the subject of specialization after the prescribed post-graduate qualification.
(4) Twenty years standing in the profession.

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NOTE

Qualifications, experience, age limit, etc. relaxable in exceptional cases.

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The Applications/Nominations supported by bio-data may be sent to Shri Ashok Harinal, Director, Department of Science and Technology, Technology Bhawan, New Mehrauli Road, New Delhi 110 016 on or before 30 September 1993. Fax 011-661682/6862418/6863847, Tel. 661682 OR 667373 ext. 306.