in outlook and probably also in staff, at least to start with. For it must be grasped that, much as the British prefer themselves to foreigners, foreigners, and particularly Americans, lead in this esoteric field. The expatriate British observers, who are prominent in the US and in South Africa, should be invited to become involved despite their almost universal dislike of the pettiness of English astronomical politics, and their strong attachment to clear skies, warm climates, and in some cases high salaries, and their perversity in wanting to investigate the universe rather than talk about it. The observatory should be built on the shortest possible time scale—five years is entirely possible—in Chile where the climate is guaranteed, or possibly in Southern Spain, the Canary Islands, Baja California or the south-west US. Many of us know that it is possible to collaborate and co-operate with the Americans, the Chileans, the Germans, the Spaniards or the Mexicans, and we relish the opportunity of trying. The major telescope should have an aperture ≥ 90 inches, should be built on a proven design and should contain no British, and hence unproven, astronomical innovations. Technical expertise should be encouraged.

Give a few young and active British astronomers, who want to find out, access to such an observatory, and in my opinion the attitudes will change overnight.

Margaret Burbidge, who has just arrived at Herstmonceux, is strongly behind such an idea, but she and others who would like to do this are terribly vulnerable. It will be so easy to talk this proposal to death or worse still to decide to build a telescope on a peculiarly British site (the Rock of Gibraltar?) and a British time scale (21 years for the INT) with a newly designed British mounting and even with a revolutionary mirror design. This is what we can expect if the old system of SRC planning committees, instrumental committees and never-ending consultations with everyone is adhered to. It has long been understood by those who successfully build major instruments, be they big accelerators or large optical or radio telescopes, that the only successful way to operate is by the appointment of a governing board or committee and of a project director (who may well be promised the observatory directorship) and who has authority delegated to him by the board over all phases of design, construction and site selection. He must be able to hire his own staff, again subject to approval by the board.

I have come a long way from the discussion of Hoyle's resignation. But it is clear to me that the circumstances of his departure from Cambridge

should signal the end of attempts to build on the old system. We can try something new like this, but if rapid progress along these lines does not take place, I for one would strongly advise the Science Research Council to save its money. Enough has been wasted already.

Yours faithfully,

GEOFFREY BURBIDGE

*Department of Physics,
University of California, San Diego,
Post Office Box 109,
La Jolla, California 92037*

Taxonomy in Distress

SIR,—It should perhaps be pointed out that it is not only insect taxonomy which is in trouble (*Nature*, 238, 475; 1972); the story can be repeated in other fields. A series of major ornithological collections have been allowed to go abroad—the Gould Collection in the last century, the Rothschild Collection before the war, most of the Hewitt Collection within the last few years, among others. The transfer of the birds in the national collection to Tring (*Nature*, 221, 1094 and 1177; 1969) proves not only to have rendered them inaccessible to most people, but to have brought all work on them to a halt indefinitely. Could we perhaps be informed when the collection is going to be available again, and what arrangements have been made to facilitate work on the fossil bird collection now that the recent comparative material has been transferred elsewhere? It seems time that more consideration was given to whether any work will be done behind the excessively expensive ornament adorning the entrance to the new department foisted on us in such an arbitrary manner.

Yours faithfully,

W. R. P. BOURNE

*The Seabird Group,
Zoology Department,
Tillydrome Avenue,
Aberdeen AB9 1A5*

Lugworm Wronged

SIR,—I would like to correct any impression given by your report on the recent Challenger Society Meeting at the University of East Anglia (News and Views, *Nature*, 238, 131; 1972) that lugworm (*Arenicola marinus*) prey on whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*). In fact the reverse is true. Moreover I claim only that whiting eat lugworm when the latter are used as bait, or are injured, as intact animals are seldom found in whiting stomachs.

Yours faithfully,

M. G. PAWSON

*Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food,
Fisheries Laboratory,
Lowestoft, Suffolk*

Announcements

University News

Professor Arthur Whiteman has been appointed to the chair of petroleum geology at the **University of Bergen**.

Professor H. A. F. Dudley, Monash University, has been appointed to the chair of surgery tenable at St Mary's Hospital Medical School, **University of London**, and **Dr R. Wilson, SRC**, has been appointed to the Perren chair of astronomy tenable at University College London.

Appointments

J. M. Buist of ICI Organics Division has been elected chairman of council of the **Institution of the Rubber Industry**.

Dr L. S. Renzoni, International Nickel Company of Canada, **R. Thompson**, Dominion Engineering Works, **W. G. Brissenden**, Noranda Mines, and **V. N. Mackiw**, Sherritt Gordon Mines, have been appointed sub-committee chairmen on the **National Advisory Committee on Mining and Metallurgical Research** of Canada.

The following appointments have been made in the **Science Research Council**: **Mr J. F. Hosie** as director, administration; **Dr A. W. Lines** as director with responsibility for nuclear physics and engineering; **Mr M. O. Robins** as director with responsibility for the Astronomy, Space and Radio and Science Divisions; **Mr A. J. Egginton** as head of the Engineering Division; **Dr H. H. Atkinson** as head of the Astronomy, Space and Radio Division; **Mr I. A. Learmouth** as head of the Nuclear Physics Division; **Mrs J. O. Paton** as head of the Science Division.

Miscellaneous

Professor Thomas K. Sherwood, University of California at Berkeley, has won the 1973 **E. V. Murphree award** in industrial and engineering chemistry, which is sponsored by the Esso Research and Engineering Company.

Professor Stanford Moore and **Professor W. H. Stein**, Rockefeller University, have been jointly awarded the third **Linderström-Lang gold medal** and prize of 15,000 Danish kroner, in recognition of their contributions to protein chemistry.

Erratum

IN the article "Circadian Variation of RNA in Human Leucocytes", by William C. Kohler, Ismet Karacan and Owen M. Rennert (*Nature*, 238, 94; 1972), the second sentence of paragraph 2 should read "A diurnal variation in the number of circulating leucocytes in man has