

Viewpoint: The state of the observatory

With the coming of a new Executive, it is timely to review the status of the CFH telescope. Furthermore, 1980 saw the beginning of the operating phase of the observatory. This report intends to show under what conditions this new phase takes place.

During 1980 the CFH team has made heroic efforts to provide the best possible conditions to our visiting astronomers. But the available time and resources did not allow everything to be properly tuned-up; at most we were able to attend to the most urgent crises. If the building and dome have now lived through their youth, the telescope itself is still an infant in poor health and the CFH instrumentation remains embryonic. It is essential that the commissioning of all our systems be done in the most orderly and efficient way possible if we want to avoid costly and frustrating repeats. We aim for a complete and normal operation of the telescope by the end of 1982, and the availability of all the basic instrumentation before 1984. Hoping for more would be utopia. Visiting astronomers will have to be very aware of our limited resources during the next two years. Their programs must call for a minimum of intervention by our technicians, taken as they will be by the attention required of the CFH telescope. Although the situation has much improved in 1980, the observers will still have to put up with fragile installations and, at times, some discomfort. We are trying hard to serve our visitors well. In 1981 our efforts in that direction will aim at improving what is already installed.

Our 1981 technical schedule (see Commissioning Program elsewhere in this issue) calls for the commissioning of mostly simple instruments during the first semester and of large modules later. Thus we have been able to dedicate 75% of the time to observing in

the first part of the year. During the 2nd semester this will be decreased to 50%. And with the Cassegrain focus as well as the prime and coudé foci available, competition for observing time will then become fierce!

Observing runs contribute enormously to the CFH progress. Comments from observers, the quality of their data and, why not, the problems which arise, are among the best guides we have. We are grateful to our visitors for their precious help in commissioning their telescope.

During the second semester of 1980, observing conditions on Mauna Kea have been excellent, 115 of the 130 nights (88%) being clear. Seeing was often better than 1" and rarely worse than 2". And we have not yet had time to optimize the dome seeing! On the technical side, observing runs have generally been good, despite a few memorable difficulties. But one must admit that it is often luck and the skill of the telescope operators which allowed most of the runs to be successful. We know better than all observers how thin an ice they tread on!

We conclude by stressing that much effort is still needed to optimize the performance of the CFH telescope. A fully operational phase should be attained in 1983. Despite the current weaknesses of our facilities, astronomers can already obtain good results. This shows what a powerful instrument the full-blown CFH telescope will be.

Finally we ask all observers to send us the titles and summaries of the papers they are preparing, based on CFH data. We could publish these in forthcoming issues of the "Bulletin"; and it would be a great encouragement to our crew... and to the Time Allocation Committee at future meetings.

René Racine
Executive Director

Job openings

There are two positions currently open at CFHT. One is for a high level electronics technician to implement and maintain hardware on the telescope. The

other is for a software technician.

Interested persons should send a resumé to CFHT headquarters.

The Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope Corporation (CFHT) is a joint organization of the National Research Council of Canada (NRC), the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique of France (CNRS), and the University of Hawaii (UH).

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CANADA-FRANCE-HAWAII TELESCOPE CORP.
P. O. Box 1597
Kamuela, Hawaii 96743 USA
Telephone: (808) 885-7944 Telex: 633147 CFHT