

Prof. McVittie to Expand U. I. Astronomy Offerings

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By Dave Phillips

The astronomy department at the University of Illinois will be expanded slightly this year under its new head, Dr. George C. McVittie.

McVittie, who comes here from Queen Mary College, University of London, will teach two graduate courses on relativity and cosmology, his specialties.

He will be assisted part time by Prof. Ray Langebartel of the mathematics department, who will teach two courses for undergraduates in the mathematical theory of weather and weather changes. McVittie says these are subjects allied to astronomy and are being offered as pure theory courses, much different from the basic meteorological course now offered by the geology department.

Dr. McVittie has been a professor of mathematics at the University of London. His specialty has been astronomy.

He recalls that his interest in meteorology arose when, during World War II, he served in that division of the British Ministry of War. While serving, he made two trips to the United States to consult with U.S. meteorology experts.

Dr. McVittie since that time has developed his knowledge of meteorology until today he is a contributor to various scientific magazines on the subject. His latest was printed in February in the Swedish meteorological periodical, *Tellus*. It has since been reprinted by University Press.

Warned that he may, in the future, be called upon as a "flying saucer" expert, McVittie said he has heard of the local outbreak of "flying-sauceritis." He went on to say that he has read newspaper accounts in England of European reports of the nebulous objects.

He stated, "Most of the reports must have come from very good observers—from their descriptions I have been able, several times, to know that they had seen a large meteorological balloon."

However, he went on, "I can recall no such reports from England." He explained that England's sky does not lend itself to observation.

In the field of writing, Dr. McVittie is now working on a book on relativity and cosmology, whose deadline is February, 1954. To be published by Chapman and Hall, of England, it will be a part of that company's series of monographs on astrophysics.

Although there are many universities with large observatories, the

ASTRONOMER STUDIES MOON



Dr. George C. McVittie, new head of the University of Illinois astronomy department, usually isn't a moon-gazer, but he is shown here examining an illustration from a new book by Dr. Harold C. Urey, of the Univer-

sty of Chicago, called "The Planets." Dr. McVittie comes to the U. of I. from Queen Mary College, of the University of London, where he was a professor of mathematics in astronomy.

great problem, he believes, is obtaining men trained to interpret observations. That is one of the functions of the U. of I. astronomy department, he says—to train men to interpret the reported findings of observatories.

It is with this in mind that he has instituted the theory courses in relativity. He pointed out that the theory of relativity, made famous by Albert Einstein, is one of the tools used in the interpretation of astronomical data.

One of the books on his desk is "The Mathematical Theory of Relativity" by Sir Arthur Eddington, one of the pioneers in the theory. Dr. McVittie explained that he had worked under Eddington for his Ph.D. at Cambridge University,

England.

Dr. McVittie said that the astronomy department at the U. of I. is essentially for teaching "what telescopes are and how they are used and then "how to interpret the findings."

He and his wife will live at 404 W. Michigan Ave., Urbana, when their furniture clears the customs office in Chicago.

Dr. McVittie said he and his wife have discussed the many published reports of Britons who say Americans live at an intense pace. The McVitties disagree, and say that if anything, Americans at times take it easier than the English. One of the reasons given by Dr. McVittie is the summer heat. Britain's temperatures rarely reach above 80.