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AUTHORIZATION OF A COMMITTEE ON TERMINOLOGY IN BIOLOGICAL
NOMENCLATURE BY THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

A Statement Presented to the International Union of
Biological Sciences, July, 1958

To the Secretary of the International Union of Biological
Sciences, Professor Montalenti:*

Our President, Professor Hörstadius, requested that at this Session of the International Union of Biological Sciences there be submitted a definite proposal relative to the authorization of a Committee of this Union to include representatives of the three International Commissions (or Committees) dealing with problems of nomenclature in the three divisions of Biology, namely Botany, Zoology, and Microbiology (Bacteriology).

The suggestion was made that the three codes covering problems in biological nomenclature, although all based initially upon certain Linnaean precepts, have been developed in the three disciplines quite independently. These International Commissions or Committees constituted by International Congresses representing respectively the three branches of biology have developed three nomenclatural codes. These codes determine the character of the scientific names given or to be given to all living things. We may well regret that the comprehensive discipline of biology did not supervise from the beginning the development of a single code governing nomenclature. This was not done, and the three nomenclatural codes, while reasonably alike in many respects, reflect some fundamental conflicts in underlying philosophies which have resulted in numerous differences. These varying concepts and philosophies are so deeply rooted that it is believed, for the present at least, to be quite unprofitable to attempt to reconcile them and to develop a single biological code of nomenclature. A committee if constituted by this Union should not have as its immediate objective such reconciliation or unification.

*The proposal relative to the authorization of a Committee on Terminology in Biological Nomenclature was approved by the International Union of Biological Sciences.

However, a joint committee could prove most helpful to working biologists in quite a different field (area). Unfortunately it is true that there are many identical words and phrases in the several codes that are used with different meanings, even more frequently identical concepts are given different names. In most cases these differences in terminology are biologically indefensible, disturbing and troublesome. If agreement as to terminology is found in some cases to be impossible, it would be quite appropriate to make clear the fact that names of some concepts in botany are synonyms of quite different names used in zoology. Biological taxonomists owe it to those who use the codes who are not "professional" taxonomists to minimize terminological difficulties. For example, the Journal of General Microbiology published in Britain accepts articles dealing with bacteria, certain fungi and yeasts, protozoa, and viruses. The editor can hope that the protozoologist will use names for his organisms that conform to the rules of the zoological code, that the mycologist knows his botanical code, and the bacteriologist is a passable taxonomist and familiar with the bacteriological code. But he must be constantly on the alert to see that each author uses correctly words having taxonomic significance such as availability, valid, correct, epithet, specific name, binary combination and others with the meanings recognized in the pertinent code.

Mr. President: I propose the following:

1. That this Union authorize the formation of an ad hoc Committee on Terminology in Biological Nomenclature.
2. That the Committee be constituted by asking each of the three international commissions to appoint (or nominate) two members.
3. That the Committee be asked to consider and report on possibilities of reconciliation of differing terminologies in the several International Codes of Biological Nomenclature.

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