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## Preface

Maurice Yonge

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## Preface

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The Royal Society has long been concerned with knowledge concerning the distribution of animals and plants on the globe. We need only mention its association with the voyages of Captain James Cook. It was with this tradition in mind that in 1956 Council set up the Southern Zone Committee. The initial suggestion for this came from its first Chairman the late Professor Carl Pantin, who was deeply concerned with the need for describing the fauna and flora of areas, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere, clearly necessary for adequate knowledge of the original distribution of life before natural boundaries were in one way or another completely obliterated by human activities.

To this end an initial expedition was run to southern Chile and later, among other activities, and owing to the particular stimulus of Professor Corner, interest became focused on the Solomon Islands. Here one was concerned with the island chain leading from New Guinea towards the ultimate Melanesian islands of the Fijis. Following this Expedition, attention was naturally drawn to a continuation of work into the New Hebrides. It is the results of this Expedition that we are now discussing and which, incidentally, point the way to further work involving the Santa Cruz Islands.

Because the New Hebrides are an instance of that most remarkable of political compromises a condominium, the expedition had to be approved by the French as well as the British administration. This led to a highly significant French participation in the expedition, one that is represented at this Discussion meeting by the very welcome presence of Dr Raynal from Paris. It was also an expedition involving much movement from island to island with major problems of organization and suitable location of expedition members. In a wide variety of ways it involved major problems of leadership.

I would wish, as Chairman of the Southern Zone Committee, to express the very deep appreciation of the Society for all that Dr Kenneth Lee did, as Leader, to ensure the unquestioned high success of the New Hebrides Expedition. Personal and international relations could not have been more pleasant nor more and better work done in the available time. Moreover, as all who have had personal concern with expeditions are all too well aware, problems may begin rather than end when the field work comes to an end. There is then the question of writing up, of editing and of publication. Here again, and due very largely to Dr Lee's assistance in editing, the results of the expedition are going to be produced with quite exceptional speed. I would like to assure him again of our appreciation of all he has done.