

Setiembre 10 de 1993

Dr. Antonio Mercader
Sr. Ministro de Educación y Cultura
Reconquista 535
11000 Montevideo
Uruguay

Dear Dr. Mercader:

I've recently heard that the Uruguayan government is considering contracting or even abolishing the teaching of Astronomy in public high schools. If this is indeed about to happen, I would like to ask you to reconsider the matter. Astronomy was the path through which our present global civilization first developed Newtonian physics, and it is through Newtonian physics that essentially all the technology in the modern world arose. Astronomy remains a superb way (I believe bay far the best) of introducing young people to science – not just the results of science, but also, and more important, the methods of science. While science can be used both for good and for ill, it is very clear that the future will belong to those nations with strong scientific foundations – not just among technical workers, but in the general public. In addition, Astronomy provides some real answers to the deepest questions of origins and fates of life, worlds, the Sun, the stars, and the universe itself. Every human culture has devoted some effort to try to answer such questions. It is our enormous good fortune to be alive at the first time in history when some of those answers are now available and are ready to be communicated to non-specialists. For all of these reasons I believe that continuing the proud Uruguayan tradition of teaching Astronomy in the secondary schools will benefit not only your nation, but more generally, the human species.

With every good wish,

Cordially,

Carl Sagan
David Duncan Professor of Astronomy
and Space Sciences
Director, Laboratory for Planetary
Studies, Cornell University