

The Editor,  
*The Journal of Glaciology*

SIR,

*The terms "Névé" and "Firn"*

In the course of bibliographic studies connected with the preparation of the lists of "Recent Polar Literature" published in each issue of the *Polar Record*, I have an opportunity to examine annually a very large mass of printed material dealing with snow and ice. The terms *névé* (French) and *firn* (German), which are synonymous, appear to be used with roughly equal frequency in English literature. For many years I have held no preference for either as the English term, but have hoped that one or other would eventually prevail, especially in glossaries, because many authors writing in English feel that it is necessary to use both terms every time they mention the subject.

During the past few years I have been impressed by the frequency with which the word *firn* snow has been printed in English as firm snow. We may think that authors and printers should notice these misprints, but the fact is that in a surprising number of cases they do not. It might therefore be most practical if glaciologists writing in English could adopt the term *névé*. There would seem to be only two objections to this: the accents in *névé* (which can hardly be dropped), and the fairly well-established use of the word *firn* in the concepts "firn line" and "firnification." I can trace very few examples in English of the use of "névé line" or "névé line," but an increasing number of examples of "firn line" make me wonder. "Firnification" is a useful term which can certainly be retained even if *firn* is dropped. In my opinion it would be useful if the British Glaciological Society could give a lead in this matter.

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[It would be interesting and useful to receive comments on Dr. Roberts's letter.—Ed.]

SIR,

*Alpine Snow Accumulation*

During the severe winter of 1950-51 snow fell in the alpine regions in quantities unprecedented within living memory. Evidence of the abnormal conditions was afforded by news of chalets and villages being swept away and many lives being lost owing to the irresistible rush of avalanches of proportions never before experienced and in places unaccustomed to the menace of such catastrophes. A normal snow deposition in the early winter was succeeded by extremely heavy falls at the end of February and through March and, indeed, there were still falls as late as May. These abnormal conditions caused extensive accumulations of snow in places where massing is normally much less, resulting in tremendous avalanche deposits, not only in the gullies down which the snow poured but also, in spread-out formation right down in the valleys below. Where only small streams of snow have previously been known to flow depositing quantities which have quickly disappeared in the spring or early summer, great masses were still lying after the middle of June and some of the passes were still closed to traffic in spite of the most strenuous efforts to make them available.

These unusual conditions caused some of the older inhabitants to shake their heads in doubt as to whether such exceptional masses would entirely disappear before another winter commenced to consolidate and add to their bulk. It would take a very hot or extremely wet summer, they said, to accomplish the complete dispersal of some of the larger accumulations.

These accumulations have been useful, however, in affording opportunity for observation of glacier formation from a slightly unorthodox angle. It is not difficult to visualize the results of a series of winters of similar severity. Not only would the retreat of the glaciers tend to be arrested but also very small new glaciers could form in ravines down which snow has poured in avalanche formation in such quantities that the subsequent summer's rains and sun have been insufficient to effect complete annihilation.

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