

THE OPTICAL VARIABILITY OF 3C 446

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3C 446 is one of the most violently variable quasars. Its optical variability has been studied for instance by Barbieri et al. (1978), by Pollock et al. (1979) and by Miller (1981). The quasar exhibits periods of prolonged activity, with amplitude exceeding 3 mag, and with intraday significant variations. We observed 3C 446 in the last month of Aug. 1983, finding the quasar of unprecedented brightness.

Three plates were obtained with the 67/92 cm Schmidt telescope on Aug. 4, 9 and 11, and in all three the quasar is seen at $B=15.1$, the brightest value ever recorded. We have only one previous plate of low quality taken on July 31, and 3C 446 is fainter by approximately 0.7 mag. Finally, on two plates taken the 27th of Aug. with the 182 cm telescope at Cima Ekar we see it again down to $B=16.2$.

We have drawn in Fig. 1 the light curve from 1967 to 1983. The impression is of an overall increase of brightness. Hopefully other observers will follow 3C 446 in the next months. Spectroscopic coverage of this active phase is also of extreme interest.

REFERENCES

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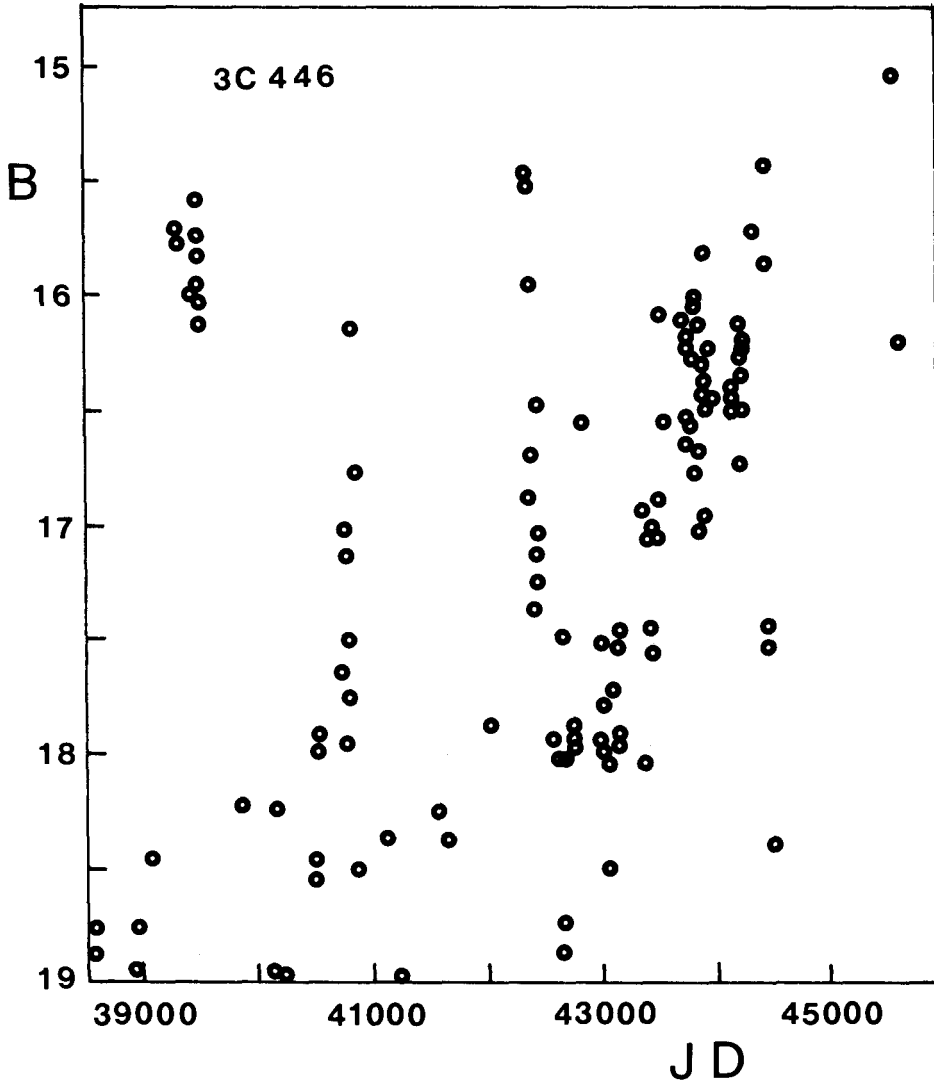


FIGURE 1 - Light curve of 3C 446 from 1967 to 1983.