time and effort finding out what the other ant specialists had in their collections. A limited amount of exchange and borrowing went on, but the specialists rarely visited one another in order to compare whole taxa in one another's collections. The result was a disastrous compartmentalization of ant taxonomy by political boundaries and by individual myrmecologists that developed increasingly into a mindless description derby.

By 1950, the reaction had set in, and W. S. Creighton and others began revisionary work based on neo-Darwinian species concepts that recognized formal taxa only at specific and subspecific (geographical race) levels. Soon even the subspecies category was disowned by many myrmecologists (Wilson and Brown, 1953), and most of these now require subspecific and varietal names to stand or fall as species names. What I do in effect is to consider each published name to represent an hypothetical species. The name remains in the species list until reasonable evidence is adduced to show that it is either a distinct species in its own right, or a junior synonym of some other species. The investigation of the validity of these hypothetical species usually involves the comparison of types and the evaluation of such differences as may exist by the study of augmented material. Such investigation almost always takes much more time, trouble and thought than was expended on the original description of the taxon concerned; in fact, original descriptions of many varieties, subspecies and even species of ants are extremely brief and casual, and doubtless they received no more than a few minutes' attention from their authors. Occasional modern authors are apparently equally offhanded about synonymizing taxa at and below species level; I deplore this tendency, because experience shows that some, even if only a few, of the poorly described subspecies and varieties are in fact good biological species, or that they are synonyms of species other than those to which they were originally assigned.

Pheidole includes so many species that a full-scale revision for any primary tropical area of continental dimensions might occupy half a lifetime. Acknowledging that full world revision is the desirable goal, I feel that well-considered synonymic studies now will help to bring the number of valid names down to a level reasonable for would-be revisers. The synonymy of some common and variable species is like an onion that must be peeled away carefully, layer by layer.

Probably not more than half the more than 1050 names I have listed for the world *Pheidole* will remain unsynonymized by the end of the century, but the tendency towards reduction of names will be partly countered by the description of new species, for there are hundreds of these awaiting characterization and naming. In adding the new species, authors should provide careful and reasonably full descriptions and illustrations, analysis of variation and relationships, and a statement of differences from related species.