

large stress on anniversary tributes, the Warsaw meeting gave relatively small space to these honorifics, and the main feature of the opening session was the speech of Jan Kaczmarek, chairman of the Committee of Science and Technology. In his speech, Chairman Kaczmarek stressed in particular the necessity for working out methods of automating Polish industry to ensure optimum productivity, and also discussed the importance of increasing the effectiveness of industry-orientated scientific and technological research. The financial problems inherent in such research were stressed: the appropriation for such research in the period 1969-75 will increase at a rate in excess of the rate of increase of the national income. In 1975, the proposed expenditure on research projects will be at least 25 milliard zloty (£430 million), which is twice the 1969 appropriation. In view of this increase, it is not surprising that much of the latter part of Chairman Kaczmarek's speech was devoted to practical and financial problems: improvement of the organization and structure of the scientific basis of industry, organization of education and training, and the stimulation of initiative and "commitment" of scientific workers. In the discussion which followed, Henryk Japłoński, Minister of Education, stressed the need for a "confrontation with the principal aims" of the Polish economy, the financial coordination of research projects and the revision of technical training programmes in institutes of higher education in accordance with the needs and trends of current technology.

Both Chairman Kaczmarek and the speakers in the discussion raised the question of international cooperation on scientific and technological problems (with special reference, of course, to the Soviet Union and other countries of the Soviet bloc), but this topic seemed less important than the main subject of Polish financing of Polish industry. Clearly, the current expenditure is seen as a self-liquidating project, which will ultimately repay the initial investment by greater returns from industry, brought about by automation, rationalization and the introduction of new and more efficient methods. It is interesting to note, however, that while the Soviet Union still (at least in its publicity) seems to treat all scientific and technological progress (from sputniks to fish-spotting and from television sets to trans-continental pipelines) as primarily "prestige" achievements, at least one of her Socialist-bloc neighbours regards such progress from the practical and pragmatic basis of financial outlay and projected material returns

AIRPORTS

Bold Plans from New Group

Two independent companies are to join forces in an attempt to add more weight to the arguments for building London's third airport at Foulness. They are the Thames Aeroport Group, a large consortium of companies backed by private investment, and Bernard L. Clark and Partners, a group of civil engineering consultants. This new group, which will operate as the Thames Aeroport Group, has submitted proposals to the Roskill Commission for a combined major airport and seaport on reclaimed land at Foulness, in the Thames Estuary. The Roskill Commission is at present investigating the suitability of sites at Foulness, Wing, Nuthampstead and Thurleigh.

Thames Aeroport Group's proposals are for a major seaport, on the lines of the massive Dutch Europort complex, and an airport to be built on fifty-six square miles of reclaimed land. The seaport would be capable of accommodating huge million-ton tankers and would provide an obvious location for a major container terminal. In fact, Mr F. Stower, chairman of the Thames Aeroport Group consultants team, said that the seaport may well be more important than the airport, and Mr Bernard Clark emphasized this by saying that every acre of Holland's Europort provides £10,000 of business a year. The proposals also include a terminal for the airport, situated between St Katherine's and London docks, linked to the airport by a fast road and rail service through the North Thames docks area.

Mr Clark indicated that much of the engineering studies on the project have already been done, and an economic survey is now needed. Such a survey will be carried out by the Netherlands Economic Institute, under contract to the group. The institute has carried out similar surveys for the World Bank, the EEC Development Fund, and several governments, and its president, Professor Leo H. Klaassen, has said that priority would be given to the Thames Aeroport Group's Foulness proposals.

The formation of this new consortium means that there are now two main contenders for possible development of the Foulness site: Thames Aeroport Group and Thames Estuary Development Company (TEDCO), both of which will be making proposals to the Roskill Commission. Sir William Gorell Barnes, Thames Aeroport Group's chairman, took pains to point out, however, that the new consortium hopes to avoid intense competition between interested companies, because this might prejudice the chances of Foulness being accepted for the airport. It seems, however, that TEDCO are not enthusiastic about cooperation with Thames Aeroport, and, on the other hand, Thames Aeroport have stopped exchanging information with TEDCO. Sir William claims that the two consortia are not duplicating each other's work to a great extent but, as they are both submitting plans for similar installations, that viewpoint is rather difficult to see. Moreover, TEDCO have already studied the possibilities for a combined seaport and industrial complex at Foulness (see *Nature*, 221, 702; 1969), and have come up with plans which bear a marked resemblance to the proposals made by the Thames Aeroport Group.

MEDICINES

New Medicines Commission

THE thirteen members of the new Medicines Commission, which under the 1968 Medicines Act will advise the British Government on all matters relating to the safety, efficacy and quality of all drugs intended for human and veterinary use, have now been appointed and hope to have their first meeting before the end of the year. The chairman of the commission will be Sir Derriek Dunlop, who has been chairman of the Committee on Safety of Drugs since it was established in 1963 and which has been responsible for the voluntary cooperation between the drug manufacturers, the medical profession and the government.

Under the new Act, the government will introduce