

NUCLEAR POWER

Expected Defence

THE government's reply last week to the report of the Select Committee on Science and Technology on nuclear power chiefly defended the formation of the National Nuclear Corporation (NNC) in its current form (Cmnd 5499, HMSO, 1973).

The select committee had recommended that the government should take at least a 30% share in the new company, the remainder of the shares being open for tender. Any special management that the new company required should be provided on a contract basis, according to the select committee.

In the event, the government allowed GEC to acquire 50% of the shares and took up a mere 15% for itself through the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA).

The government says in its reply that "the basic need is for a company with the commercial, financial and managerial strength to meet the United Kingdom's requirements for nuclear power safely and to forecast cost, time of completion and performance. A company with these capabilities should also be in a position to compete successfully in the world market and would ensure that our substantial public investment in nuclear technology is exploited to the full and is suitably remunerated".

For this to be achieved, the government argues, "a unified management under the supervision of a principal shareholder who has a substantial financial commitment to the company and experience of the industry" is a main requirement.

The committee has also been worried by the prospect that GEC might withdraw from the new company. The government considers this unlikely, because GEC's financial commitment is "a serious and substantial one". Furthermore, the company has agreed not to sell its shares for five years without the consent of the government. If, later, GEC does want to sell, the UKAEA is to have first option on the shares.

The government also sets out to reassure the committee about the constitution of the Nuclear Power Advisory Board (NPAB). The committee said that unless the board was given an effective role it would be better not to appoint it. The government replies to this by stating that it sees the role of the board as being one of the greatest importance.

Equally the government defends the appointment of Lord Aldington, Chairman of the National Nuclear Corporation, to the board. The committee had argued that the construction company

should not be represented. The government says that it carefully considered the committee's comments, but believes that "NNC's views on all aspects of nuclear power development should be available to the NPAB and that this can best be achieved by Lord Aldington's membership. NNC's commercial judgment will be a very important factor in determining the direction and success of this country's future exploitation of nuclear power".

The government also declares that it is considering the committee's recommendation that the Chief Inspector of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate should not have any other responsibilities.

The committee learned when it took evidence from Mr E. C. Williams, the Chief Inspector, that he is also the head of the Energy Technology Division within the Department of Trade and Industry. Fearing a clash of interest between the two jobs, the committee came out in favour of keeping them separate.

The government stated that it will take this into account "during further consideration of the arrangements that will be proposed for a Safety and Health Commission".

AIR POLLUTION

Emission Remission

by our Washington Correspondent

ALTHOUGH motor manufacturers have so far failed in their attempts to keep exhaust catalysts off all cars sold in the United States next year, they may yet win a partial reprieve from the full force of the Clean Air Act. Last week the Senate Public Works Committee decided to recommend to Congress that the timetable for meeting the strict exhaust emission controls specified by the act be relaxed a little. The committee will recommend, in short, that the controls be applied in California next year, as planned, but that they should not be extended to the other forty-nine states until 1976. This will be a year later than planned.

If the Senate and the House of Representatives take up the committee's recommendation, it means that exhaust catalysts would have to be fitted to all cars sold in California next year, since there is not enough time to develop other technologies for meeting the standards. But they would not have to be used elsewhere in the nation until 1976.

The committee's partial retreat will not, however, please the Ford Motor Company or Chrysler, since officials from those two manufacturers argued

COPYRIGHT

Carry on Copying

by our Washington Correspondent

A SPECIAL appeals court in Washington DC ruled last week that the copyright laws do not prevent libraries from photocopying journal articles or pages from books. The decision, which overturns an earlier ruling by a judge of the United States Court of Claims, has been warmly applauded by scientists since it means that libraries can continue to supply them with photocopies of journal articles for research purposes. But it has been roundly condemned by publishers who claim that it will drive yet another nail into the coffin of struggling magazines.

The court also said that it is up to Congress to place limits on the amount and type of photocopying that should be allowed, so the ball is now firmly in the court of Senator John McClellan's Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights and Trademarks, which is considering amendments to the 1909 Copyright Act (see *Nature*, 244, 535; 1973).

The ruling came in a suit filed against the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

at public hearings early in November that Congress should not force the use of catalysts at all; instead, they contended, more time should be given for the motor companies to develop better technologies for cleaning up emissions from automobiles (see *Nature*, 246, 182; 1973).

Senator Jennings Randolph, chairman of the Public Works Committee, also announced last week that his committee is planning to hold more public hearings on a related matter—whether or not the control on emissions of oxides of nitrogen should be relaxed. The Environmental Protection Agency announced earlier this year that the original measurements of city air pollution, which led to the standards, were incorrect and that oxides of nitrogen may not be a great problem. Those hearings will be held in December or January.

It is unlikely that the Senate will adopt the committee's recommendation for relaxing the timetable specified by the Clean Air Act until it has also made a recommendation on the nitrogen oxides question. Thus, even if Ford and Chrysler manage to persuade other members of Congress that the committee's recommendations do not go far enough, it seems unlikely that Congress would be able to act in time to prevent catalysts from being installed on California cars next year.