

## TAIWAN

## Losing representation

*The council of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) met in Durham recently. David Davies reports*

In a decision that seems to have been reached amid some concern about the politicisation of international non-governmental scientific organisations, the Council of the IUGG at an extraordinary meeting held in Durham has voted 47-7 to cancel the membership of Taiwan and to bring in the People's Republic of China. The vote is particularly important because it could open the way to much wider Chinese membership of international organisations, though presumably only at the price of much wider expulsion of Taiwan.

Last year the International Union of Geological Science meeting in Australia took a similar course, but the Australian government had not allowed Taiwanese representatives entry visas to state their case. In Durham Professor Y. B. Tsai spoke for Taiwan, but returned with a colleague to Taipei after the ratification of the decision, even though he was scheduled to speak at a subsequent scientific meeting.

The ballot was secret but there is no doubt that the UK and United States voted against. Both these countries stressed that they had no opposition at all to Peking's membership, but only to the preconditions. Indeed, the UK tried without success to get a motion considered which simply admitted Peking whilst taking no action on Taipei. In the event it was clear that many representatives had come with the firmest instructions from their governments or academies to admit Peking on its own terms. A few countries did not even send a scientist to vote for them but despatched an embassy official from London—a practice which the International Council of Scientific Unions would do well to look at as soon as possible.

In hindsight the haste with which the IUGG seems to have brought the matter to a head was probably unnecessary. The next IUGG assembly is planned for Australia in 1979 and it was thought at one time that Australia would refuse to support a meeting at which Taipei but not Peking was represented. But the Australian position has since softened somewhat and it is possible that the Taiwanese would have been admitted provided they did not

claim to be official representatives.

The Taiwan position is difficult now, in spite of assurances that the Bureau of the IUGG will look after the interests of individuals and will ensure that appropriate information gets through. Many Durham delegates urged the Taiwanese to stay, to continue to attend meetings and to remain in the closest touch. But there is a political reason why this is unlikely. The motion that was passed did not simply call for a switch of membership—it pointedly went out of its way to explain the reason: that the "vast majority of countries" now recognise Taiwan to be a province of the People's Republic of China. The Taiwan government also claims that Taiwan is a province of China—but not, of course of the People's Republic. And the Academia Sinica of Taipei is on record as having claimed to speak only for scientists within its own shores. Thus any organisation which acknowledges *de jure* Peking rule over Taipei is unlikely to see Taiwanese citizens at its meetings in the foreseeable future.

The whole sad affair, which gives the impression of having been pushed through for political convenience, will undoubtedly give people ideas about getting rid of other countries because their policies are disagreeable or their political base is weak. □

## SWEDEN

## Spending a packet

*Wendy Barnaby reports from Stockholm on one aspect of Sweden's continuing nuclear debate*

LAST March, the Swedish branch of the Friends of the Earth sent a letter to the Prime Minister complaining that a so-called study packet on energy, produced with government funds, was in fact propaganda for nuclear power. The letter provoked some interest. The state auditors delved a little into the financing of the agency distributing the packet, Centrala Driftledningen (CDL), a non profit-making body which promotes many-sided cooperation between the electricity companies, and which is half financed by the State Power Board. The Prime Minister, Thorbjörn Fälldin, replied that he had not known about the distribution of the packet, but that to control the agency's operations would conflict with democratic principles. A question was asked in parliament, but received only a vague answer from the Energy Minister. Then recently—just before the government was to approve the State Power Board's

annual budget—rumours circulated that its normal contribution of about \$865,000 to CDL would be axed. In the event, the money was approved and the agency will be able to continue its normal operations.

The study packet was written by CDL and various organisations responsible for energy supplies. Meant for schools, study circles, trade unions, companies and so on, it consists of seven attractive booklets totalling 152 pages, as well as a 102-page book entitled *Nuclear Energy: Principles and Problems* written by a reactor physicist who works with the Atomic Energy Company. Describing the aims of the package, the distributors said that its facts should be correct and easily distinguishable from evaluations.

In some cases, this holds; often it does not. One of the booklets stresses, for example, that no increase in genetic defects has been found in the offspring of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But for a public generally ignorant of the studies showing that the survivors have more than their share of medical complaints, the sus-

picion arises that the authors are trying to minimise the effects of radiation. The same booklet also asserts that the risks of nuclear reactors are small, that the industry is subjected to stricter control than any other, and that the dangers of nuclear-weapon proliferation and terrorism have been exaggerated. In short, the publications, taken together, leave no doubt that the best available energy source is nuclear.

Following the news that CDL would be able to continue, its director, Bengt Sterne, commented: "It was a political question—it's all over now". Of course it was a political question. The President of Friends of the Earth, Lennart Daléus, agrees in principle that CDL should have its money, but says that, as it is the only organisation with enough money to give the public significant amounts of information, it should use government funds more responsibly. Certainly, the problem would be eased if both sides of the nuclear debate could compete on equal terms. It has long been a sore point with anti-nuclear groups that government support is so one-sided. A spokesman at the Department of Industry, which also deals with energy, says that at the moment there is no government fund-