

THE NATIONAL PARKS COMMISSION

THE eleventh annual report of the National Parks Commission*, which covers the year ended September 30, 1960, again records disappointment at the non-introduction in Parliament of any Bill to give effect to the amendments to the Act which the Park Planning Authorities and the Commission recommended to the Minister. This was in spite of the fact that at a Conference of Park Planning Authorities at Windermere in May, the Permanent Secretary to the Minister stressed the importance of having suggestions ready in case they were wanted at short notice. Within the limits of its powers, the Commission records a year of quiet progress, particularly in the designation of areas of outstanding natural beauty, for which the Minister has now confirmed 12 orders covering 1,700 square miles, and several local planning authorities have taken advantage of the special powers provided by the Act for actions aimed at preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of these areas. After informal discussions with the chief bodies concerned the Commission is now considering what advice to give to the Government regarding the Broads in the light of the recommendations of the Bowes Committee of inquiry into inland waterways.

Much of the report consists of notes on progress and activities in the individual Parks, which it is impossible to summarize here, but with the excellent illustrations which continue to characterize the report, the Commission's annual report is itself a first-class piece of publicity, and one encouraging general note struck in the report is that it has at last been able to expand such activities and to appoint a small additional staff for the purpose. A conference of park authorities on the subject was arranged in July 1960, at which one topic discussed was the provision of information centres in all the National Parks. This has been limited hitherto primarily by finance which the 1949 Act failed to provide. The Commission regards such information centres as of the utmost importance and has proposed to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government an increased appropriation for the purpose.

A disappointing feature of the Commission's work stressed in the report is the lack of progress with

* National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. Eleventh Report of the National Parks Commission for the year ended September 30, 1960. Pp. vi+71+8 plates. (London: H.M.S.O., 1961.) 6s. net.

long-distance routes. Although all but one of seven proposals for such routes submitted to the Minister have been approved, after ten years work not a single route has yet been completed on the ground, and there are still major difficulties in regard to the earliest and longest—the Pennine Way. Apart from this, development questions figure largely in the preoccupations of the Commission, the question of electricity distribution lines underground being again prominent. Strong exception is taken to the attitude of the South Wales Electricity Board to a request by the Pembrokeshire County Council for a small amount of underground cable in the vicinity of Whitesands Bay, St. David's, as quite at variance with the assurances given by Lord Mills when Minister of Power in a debate on the Electricity Bill, 1957. Moreover, in spite of further assurances given on the amenity clause in the Act in a debate in the House of Lords, in February, the Commission, while noting the Government's claim in the debate that all officers of the Electricity Boards are fully alive to the provisions of Section 37 of the Act, suggests that their appreciation of its implications could sometimes be improved.

Like difficulties have arisen in electricity supply to Borrowdale and to Martindale, and while regretting the existence of the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Station at Fylingdales in the North York Moors National Park, the Commission records its thanks to the Air Ministry for collaboration in an attempt to minimize the impact on the scenery. Protests was also made against the proposal, now abandoned, to rebuild Princetown Prison in the Dartmoor National Park and the Peak Park Planning Board was supported in its opposition to the proposal of the Sheffield Corporation to construct a refuse tip at Ringinglow, a proposal finally rejected by the Minister on appeal. Much anxiety is also expressed about the multiplicity of proposals for the erection of aerial masts on prominent sites, and despite the existence of Government arrangements, under which all proposals for new masts must be cleared centrally, and anyone proposing a separate site must show strong reasons for not conforming, the Commission continues to watch the position with some concern, although permission to erect a police mast of 150 ft. on Foel Eryr in Mynydd Preseli has recently been refused by the Minister.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

THE outstanding activity of the World Health Organization in 1960 was the assistance given to enable the Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville) to meet the emergency health situation in which it found itself immediately after attaining independence. This is described in the annual report of the Director-General for 1960*.

Acting on a request from the Secretary-General of the United Nations for assistance with the rapidly

deteriorating health conditions in the Congo, the Organization accepted the responsibility of co-ordinating, through the Ministry of Health, the activities of all international personnel concerned with the health of the civilian population. The report outlines the action taken by the World Health Organization during July, August and September, with the assistance of medical teams provided by national Red Cross societies and certain Governments.

The programme for the eradication of malaria from the world is reported as having made significant progress in various fields, although handicapped by a persistent shortage of funds. Sixty-one countries

* Official Records of the World Health Organization, No. 105: the Work of WHO, 1960—Annual Report of the Director-General to the World Health Assembly and to the United Nations. Pp. x+224. (Geneva: World Health Organization; London: H.M.S.O., 1961.) 6 Swiss francs; 10s.; 2 dollars.