

Teaching Teachers Physics

THE Institute of Physics and the Physical Society (which is intended to be the name of a single society) has opened a second regional centre for physics teachers in schools. The new centre will be operated from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and the object is to make available to teachers in schools some of the facilities of the university, including equipment not readily available in schools. Teachers enrolled at the centre will also have access to the students' workshop at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

If precedent is a guide, the new centre should be a considerable success. Since last September a similar centre has been operating at Manchester, with a base at the Institute of Science and Technology. Apparently there is a hard core of more than thirty teachers from schools in the neighbourhood at each of the weekly meetings on Wednesdays during the university term. At Manchester, as at Newcastle, access to a workshop is part of what the university has to offer those from the schools. The more formal activities include lectures, discussions of matters such as school examinations, and comparative assessments of the value of equipment manufactured for use in schools.

Select Committee

A BREAK in the ranks of the British nuclear power consortia was revealed when the Select Committee on Science and Technology interviewed Colonel G. W. Raby, Chairman of Atomic Power Constructors, Ltd. Not only did Colonel Raby attack the doctrine of technological development to which the other consortia are committed, but he questioned the need for the existence of the three consortia. Worse still, Colonel Raby revealed under pressure that, if APC had been allowed to tender for the Hinkley Point B contract, its bid would have been "not more than £87 per kilowatt". The Nuclear Power Group, which won the contract without the customary competition, is supplying the station at a cost of £95.5 per kilowatt. The APC claim represents a total capital cost of £109 million against the NPG price of £120 million. The difference, £11 million, is bound to be much bandied about when Mr. Stanley Brown of the Central Electricity Generating Board returns to give further evidence. It is also a shot in the arm for members of the select committee, who have been looking for something of the sort to establish their political bona-fides. It is possible, of course, that the figures given by Colonel Raby are not directly comparable with those given several weeks ago by Mr. F. H. S. Brown of the C.E.G.B.; for the time being, at least, jubilation should be restrained.

In its written evidence, APC recommended that reactor design should be standardized, with at least three stations being built to each design. The market in Britain is too small to support wholesale development of a variety of designs of reactors, cores and fuel. A single British reactor organization should be set up by the Atomic Energy Authority, with industrial and C.E.G.B. participation, and future stations should be built not by the existing consortia but by architect/engineer organizations, as in the United States. These changes, APC believes, would enable more British reactors to be sold abroad.

Parliament in Britain

CERN Contracts

THE Minister of State at the Ministry of Technology, Mr. J. Stonehouse, has said that British companies have so far obtained only 4.5 per cent of the contracts allocated at CERN even though the British Government contributes 23 per cent of the cost of the organization. The Ministry is collaborating with the Science Research Council to improve the showing of British industry. (Question, House of Commons, April 11.)

Research and Development Expenditure

ON April 14 Mr. A. Crosland, Secretary of State for Education and Science, gave Government estimates of expenditure on civil research and development in 1967-68 as £295 million, compared with £136.7 million in 1961-62; £154.2 million in 1962-63; £167.6 million in 1963-64; £195.3 million in 1964-65; £237.1 million in 1965-66; and £261.7 million in 1966-67. Groups from the Council for Scientific Policy were currently studying molecular biology; the flow of candidates into higher education; the support of university science; and the proposed European 300 GeV synchrotron, he added. (Written answer, House of Commons, April 14.)

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. J. Callaghan, gave public expenditure on military research for 1965 as £154 million, compared with £97 million in 1960 and £130 million in 1963. (Question, House of Commons, April 18.)

Antarctic Treaty

THE Antarctic Treaty Bill will enable the United Kingdom to carry out fully its obligations under the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora which were adopted by the Third Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Powers at Brussels in 1964. (Debate, April 14.)

Building Research

MR. H. WILSON, the Prime Minister, announced that responsibility for the Building Research Station will be transferred on July 1 to the Minister of Public Building and Works. The arrangements would maintain the scientific integrity of the Station's work and its close links with the building industry, and would enable research and development related to the construction industry to be co-ordinated. (Written statement, House of Commons, April 20.)

Continental Shelf

MR. G. ROBERTS, Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, said that a start was now being made on the complete geological survey of the Continental Shelf surrounding the United Kingdom by the Institute of Geological Sciences. Expenditure, estimated at £12,000 in 1966-67, was expected to be £30,000 in the current year. (Written answer, House of Commons, April 17.)

Select Committee

A MOTION in the name of Mr. Richard Crossman, Leader of the House, proposes that the Select Committee on Science and Technology should have the power to appoint subcommittees, and to refer to them any matters which fall within the ambit of the select committee. Each subcommittee would have a quorum of three, would meet publicly, and would report to the committee from time to time. (Motion published April 19.)