

University News :

London

PROFESSOR R. C. TRESS, professor of political economy in the University of Bristol, has been appointed master of Birkbeck College in succession to Dr F. K. Hare.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

PROFESSOR N. LEVINSON has been appointed head of the Department of Mathematics in succession to Professor W. T. Martin.

Lagos

PROFESSOR KURT SALOMON has been appointed professor and chairman of the newly created Department of Radiation Biology and Radiation Therapy in the College of Medicine.

Announcements

PROFESSOR D. GABOR has been awarded the Cristoforo Colombo Prize for 1967 by the International Institute of Communications in Genoa.

ERRATUM. Professor R. E. Davies, of the University of Pennsylvania (School of Veterinary Medicine), has written to the Editor to complain that the words "Professor A. V. Hill's Further Challenge to Biochemists" were omitted from the title of his article, "ATP, Activation, and the Heat of Shortening of Muscle", published in *Nature*, 214, 148 (1967). This change was made in the *Nature* office because the statement following the title began with the words "Prof. A. V. Hill has challenged biochemists to find whether the heat of shortening of muscle . . .". Professor Davies wishes it to be known that he considers the omitted words "by far the most important part of the title" because he wishes "to honour him [Professor A. V. Hill] by using his name in the title".

The Editor reserves the right to make changes to titles either so as to keep their length within reasonable bounds or so as to make them easier to understand, and if there is any danger of a change of meaning, authors are, of course, informed. The Editor is at a loss to know why Professor Davies has argued so strongly in favour of his original words.

CORRESPONDENCE**First AGR for Scotland**

SIR,—May I comment on the statements attributed to me in your article "First AGR for Scotland" (*Nature*, 216, 213; 1967)?

1. It was not I, but other witnesses, who claimed in evidence to the Select Committee on Science and Technology that replication could save 10 per cent in the cost of a second station. My views are made clear from Mr Lubbock's question (minutes 381-V, paragraph 515) to me: "I notice that you do not think very much of replication; you do not agree with the figure which has been given to us of a 10 per cent reduction for a Chinese copy of an existing nuclear station".

2. Our views on replication and improvements in design are explained at length in paragraphs 18-23 of our memorandum. The circumstances at the time of the Hunterston tender led us to adopt a policy of replication, in line with paragraph 19.

3. In comparing Hinkley Point 'B' with Dungeness 'B', I claimed that improvement of design through competition, and not replication, brought down the price by more than 10 per cent (paragraph 516).

4. The construction cost of Hinkley Point 'B' has been published by CEBG as £92m (£94m including gas turbines). It is misleading to compare these costs with the figure of

£87.5m announced by SSEB for Hunterston, because site conditions and the extent of supply are different.

5. Such comparisons are extremely difficult to make with any accuracy. The best estimate we have been able to make of the relative prices of Hinkley and Hunterston after adjustments for the differences in the two contracts shows a reduction of about 7 per cent for replication. There would be no such reduction for a third station.

6. We now know that our price for Hunterston was the most competitive. It follows that Hinkley, at only 7 per cent higher, must also have been very competitive. It could not have been, as alleged by some irresponsible commentators at the time, £10-£13m too high, and a "national scandal".

Yours faithfully,

S. A. GHALIB
(Managing Director)

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Radbrooke Hall,
Knutsford,
Cheshire.

Assessing the AGR

SIR,—The terms in which you have commented on the latest Annual Report of the Kjeller Laboratory of the Norwegian Institutt for Atomenergi prompts us to seek to add to the views we have already expressed to you.

The survey was an attempt made during 1966 to prepare an economic comparison of various reactor systems. Although it represents the AGR as having slightly higher generating costs than other systems it concludes that "there is no significant difference in the power costs of the thermal reactor types for large stations or high yearly load". Examination of the generating costs given in the report shows that the scatter between reactor systems for any given reactor size is small indeed—mainly under 5 per cent. Even under conditions of competitive tender for plants much more alike than those studied in the report, offers can span a price range several times greater than this. In this study the figures are just buyers' estimates based on a variety of uncertainties:

The AGR figures are based on data supplied by the UKAEA but even so are not a proper substitute for a tender price.

The BWR figures derive from a General Electrical Company of the United States price list issued in 1964 and replaced several times since, prices having increased 20-30 per cent up to the end of 1966.

The PWR costs are based on the same BWR price list.

The BHW costs are obtained from a computerized projection.

The CANDU costs depend on a scaling assumption applied to Canadian data.

The report emphasizes that the comparison between the various systems will be kept up to date as new data on them are obtained. In view of the comments made at the recent IAEA Symposium in London on the dangers of drawing conclusions from generalized comparisons of reactor costs, this is clearly a wise policy. In this connexion it is relevant to note that, through the medium of the British Nuclear Export Executive, we are discussing the potential in Norway for nuclear power station designs based on British and Norwegian technology with a Norwegian group comprising the Institutt for Atomenergi, Norsk Hydro, NVE and Noratom.

Yours faithfully,

E. H. UNDERWOOD
Director of Public Relations.

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority,
London.