sold privately, the Secretary of State for Wales announced in November 1967 that the Government had purchased from the new owners a critical area of some 13,000 acres including the summit of Snowdon and Llanberis Pass. The Countryside Commission will replace and extend this work of the National Parks Commission in the context of the promotion of the countryside generally. The National Parks Commission seems to think, however, that the National Parks will continue to occupy a central position in the new organization. The progress made in each park during the year is recorded in the report.

During the year under review, links with the Council of Europe were strengthened by the appointment of the National Parks Commission as the United Kingdom correspondent to a new European Information Centre on Nature Conservation. As a result of the work of the Standing Committee set up by the second "Countryside in 1970" conference, the commission has also been invited to act as the United Kingdom "focal point" for all information activities relating to the countryside.

One of the functions of the commission is to make proposals for the creation of long-distance footpaths and bridleways. In this connexion the commission submitted information and recommendations to the Committee on Footpaths appointed by the Government in 1967. An important job of the commission is the consideration of proposals for development affecting the landscape in designated and other areas of coast and countryside. During the year, 302 such proposals were considered, of which one-third were within areas of outstanding natural beauty. One of the most important of the proposals was one for a North Sea gas terminal at Bacton on the Norfolk coast (see *Nature*, 217, 10; 1968). At the public inquiry, at which the commission was represented, the Minister of Housing and Local Government agreed that the works proposed would involve "a massive and alien intrusion into the coastal landscape". He allowed the development, however, to the "great distress" of the commission. The commission points out that the inquiry did at least establish the technical possibility of taking sea gas treatment plant away from the coast, previously considered impractical.

Science in Parliament

THE Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, an organization which sets out to keep both Houses of the British Parliament informed on scientific and technological subjects, has elected a new chairman. He is Mr David Ginsburg, Labour Member of Parliament for Dewsbury since 1959, and he takes over from Mr Arthur Palmer. Mr Ginsburg, who is 47 this year, was educated at University College School and Balliol College, Oxford, where he got a degree in politics, philosophy and economics. For some years he was secretary of the research department of the Labour Party. Mr Ginsburg, whose political views are in the mainstream of the Labour Party, has been a member of the Select Committee on Science and Technology since its formation. His contributions to the sessions of the committee are always pleasant and well informed, which suggests that he is admirably equipped to be chairman of the inter-party Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.

Parliament in Britain

from our Parliamentary Correspondent

MR ROBERT WOOF, a mining Member of Parliament, won a tiny victory on February 23, when he asked the Minister of Power which nuclear power station he expected to be producing electricity at 0.54d. per unit by 1970. Mr Marsh had to admit that none would, and was generous enough to point out that the best coal-fired stations, Ratcliffe and Cottam, coming on stream in 1968, would generate at 0.54d. and 0.56d. per unit respectively. Dungeness B, the advanced gas cooled station due to start in 1971, would produce power at 0.57d. per unit. (Written answer, February 23.)

Concorde

MR WEDGWOOD BENN, Minister of Technology, announced approval for the production financing of the Concorde supersonic airliner. The amount of money would be large, he warned. The net working capital needed over the next five years would be of the order of £100 to £125 million, and the companies were arranging for their banks to advance up to £25 million, which the Government would guarantee. Mr Benn said that the rate of production would be three a month, although it depended to some extent on firm orders. Only Mr Hugh Jenkins struck a dissident note. Did the minister not agree that the proposal was a gross misuse of public funds? That depended, Mr Benn said, on whether it was a success. If it was a great success, he said, it would be a profitable investment. (Statement, February 27.)

Bristol Siddeley

LATER in the week, Mr Benn made a statement about the report of the committee of inquiry into the pricing of contracts made with Bristol Siddeley Engines. The committee, under Sir Roy Wilson, said that the company had budgeted for, and achieved, exorbitant profits on overhaul contracts. "The approximate extent of the profitability on these contracts was, at the time, known to the company at all levels of management. We do not accept that the overcharging has been justified by any of the arguments put forward by the company." The negotiations amounted to intentional misrepresentation; despite this, Mr Benn said that the Attorney General, after consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, had decided that the evidence did not justify proceedings. The company had already paid back some £3.96 million. (Oral answer, February 27.)

Chapelcross Breakdown

MR TOM SWAIN asked the Minister of Technology how long it would be before the nuclear reactor at Chapelcross would be in operation again. It was shut down after an accident in May 1967. Mr Benn said that remedial work was making good progress, but the Atomic Energy Authority could not say how soon the station would be back on stream. The loss of sales of electricity up to the end of February had cost £0.8 million. Mr Benn also told Mr Swain that the growing volume of exploration work should ensure enough uranium for the United Kingdom nuclear power programme at reasonable prices. A price variation of 10 per cent meant a change of 1.25 per cent in generating costs, he said. (Written answer, February 29.)