

them, and disasters such as floods make us feel guilty because we should have foreseen and prevented them. We do not yet feel guilty about earthquakes and eruptions, but as science and technology advance so does the range of man's control over nature.

Dame Kathleen discussed a catalogue of ills which science has brought in the wake of its advances. Industrial grime, noise, smells and fog are all the consequences of the commercial application of science. And, as a "so-called professor of chemistry and a grandmother", she was unable to avoid the issue of chemical and biological weapons, which could be the means by which future generations are deprived of the good life.

Dame Kathleen also condemned the "infamous trade" in armaments, justified by the argument that "we need the money we get from exports, and the developing countries need internal security". The real need of these nations, she said, is for teachers, doctors, nurses and engineers. But the best of these are often imported to Britain to replace those lost to America. In return for these imports of manpower we should offer not arms but technological aid in the form of, for example, roads, drains, agricultural equipment and radio sets. She cited the Germans, who have built technical colleges abroad and filled them with German made equipment, in order to gain a market for their goods. She said, "If our customers can afford to pay for armaments they can afford rather to buy the material fundamentals of a good life for their peoples when we have the wit and wisdom to provide these for export."

Another of Dame Kathleen's suggestions was that young scientists should work for two or three years, properly paid and organized, in those countries which are losing their own best scientists to other more advanced countries. The visiting scientists would have the opportunity of seeing the application of their scientific knowledge to the needs of people. And if the pure scientist has the privilege of spending much of his life being paid to do what he enjoys most, he cannot blame politicians, military men and others who misuse his results. Dame Kathleen believes that scientists have a responsibility to foresee the consequences of their research and to exercise their powers of influence as informed citizens to see that the right choice is made in terms of human happiness.

## FUEL

### More Gas

Two more gas wells have been discovered in the North Sea by the Phillips Group. The wells, which are comparatively small, are a few miles north of the large Hewett Field, discovered jointly by Phillips and Arpet. If the new fields had not been near to the Hewett Field, they would probably not have been worth developing—as it is, they can be developed together with the main field. In fact, the two new fields, named Dottie and Deborah by their discoverers, produce gas without sulphur, while the main Hewett Field produces gas which contains sulphur. The two new fields are also in a different geological stratum, which is likely to mean that the pressure of the gas will be higher. Phillips has said that the initial tests in the Deborah Field showed gas flowing at 26 million cubic feet a day. Presumably the gas will be supplied

to the Gas Council at the same rate already agreed for the Hewett Field, 2.87 pence a therm.

Renewed speculation about the possible formation of a British National Hydrocarbons Corporation is probably not a real threat to the Gas Council; but it is another example of the Labour Party's talent for argument. The supporters of the corporation, which would take over the Gas Council's responsibility for the North Sea gas industry, apparently see the issue as a test of the Government's attitude towards nationalization. But the Gas Council is already a nationalized body, so this is a hard argument to understand. And although the NHC would have a grander title than the Gas Council, its duties would be very similar. The hope of the supporters of the NHC is that it would be able to take a much harder line with the oil companies than the Gas Council so far has. In addition, when areas of the North Sea exploration area fall vacant in 1970 and 1971, the NHC would be able to take them over and exploit them.

The NHC has the support of the Labour Party conference, which voted in favour of it last year against the opposition of the then Minister of Power, Richard Marsh. Since the conference, more work has been done on the proposals. The present incumbent of the Ministry of Power, Roy Mason, has said that a decision to form the NHC would have to be taken by the whole Cabinet rather than by him alone. But it is hard to see the proposal getting any further. Whatever the mistakes of the Gas Council when gas was first discovered, it is now generally agreed that the council struck a very hard bargain with the companies which found gas. (Negotiations continue with some of the companies, notably Amoco, the Gas Council's partner in discoveries on the Indefatigable field.) The oil companies naturally regard the NHC with distaste, as a first step to full-scale nationalization of the oil companies' business in Britain. In the short run, nationalization may seem to offer advantages, but Britain would hardly benefit in the long run. The foreign earnings of British oil interests like Shell are very considerable; once the principle of nationalization had been accepted in Britain, it would be hard to prevent countries like Venezuela or Libya from doing the same. This would not help international British oil interests, though it might be a more equitable arrangement. The Government is likely to feel, once again, that earnings are more important than principles.

## RADIATION HAZARDS

### Back to Bikini

Not only the former inhabitants of the Bikini atoll will be glad that they are to be allowed to go back to the island where American nuclear weapon tests took place. The announcement last week will also be welcomed by those who feared that the explosion of nuclear weapons would permanently render the atoll uninhabitable. The Atomic Energy Commission and President Johnson are both apparently satisfied that the atoll is now fit for habitation, and the President announced the decision last week. The islands seem to have made a remarkable recovery, but the decision is nevertheless a surprising one.

The last test on Bikini took place just over ten years ago, on July 22, 1958. But by then the Bikinians