

nology towards a new wing for the laboratories, which is now under construction and will eventually provide a 50 per cent increase in floor space. A new system for supervising the research programme itself is intended to link activities more closely to the needs of the industry through four Industry Committees which are responsible to a Research Policy Committee. It is too soon to see how far this reorganization is achieving its aims, but one agreement that has been arranged involves the National Research Development Corporation, which is helping to finance an industrial-scale trial of new ways for using refractory materials in furnaces.

INTENSIVE FARMING

Looking After Animals

FOUR codes of practice on the welfare of animals were last week accepted by both Houses of Parliament, but the debates often reached a highly emotional level, perhaps reflecting the depth of feeling which usually surrounds the topic of intensive farming. Both Lord Beswick, who moved acceptance of the codes in the House of Lords, and Mr N. Ross, Secretary of State for Scotland, who moved this in the Commons, likened the codes to the Highway Code: they are apparently intended as a guideline but, if they are broken, legal proceedings can be instituted.

The codes have sprung largely from the report of the committee under Professor F. W. Rogers Brambell which investigated practices in intensive farming, but the main criticisms of the codes have been that they do not go as far as the recommendations suggested by the Brambell Report. They relate respectively to pigs, cattle, turkeys and domestic fowls, and the debates last week were chiefly concerned with the recommendations about the physical space which should be allocated to poultry and calves. The Earl of Selkirk and Mr W. Burden both moved amendments regretting that the codes do not adequately reflect the recommendations of the Brambell Committee; and, in the event, both amendments were withdrawn.

The Earl of Selkirk was concerned that nothing positive would be achieved, because they merely stated principles which were already being practised by any good husbandman. He thought that a better course of action would be to introduce amended codes in the next session of Parliament—"a code of which we can be proud and which stands clearly for certain principles". Mr Burden echoed this line of argument in the Commons, but both agreed that intensive farming is unavoidable and, if correctly carried out, would not result in the ill-treatment of animals.

Debates on these amendments centred largely around the argument that the codes are a step in the right direction, and that to throw them out at this stage would leave nothing. Members of both Houses accepted that economic pressures bearing on the farming community could only increase the scale of intensive farming, and these codes, if widely followed, would ensure that such a development would not be detrimental to animal welfare. Mr Cledwyn Hughes, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, undertook to instruct the state veterinary service to provide a full report during the next session on how the codes work out in the field.

Parliament in Britain

Nuclear Power

MR ANTHONY WEDGWOOD BENN, Minister of Technology and Minister of Power, said that oxidation of minor steel components in six Magnox reactors had reduced output from these stations by about 400 MW, and they are now being operated at reduced temperatures. The stations are still exceeding their design load factors, however, and there is no threat to supplies this winter. Mr Benn was also satisfied that the nuclear consortia and the Central Electricity Generating Board are investigating the full consequences of the problem of oxidation, and that the advanced gas cooled stations will not be affected. Mr Frank Judd had asked for a statement on the technical difficulties which had led to a reduction in output at nuclear power stations in Britain. (Written answer, October 13.)

Multi-role Combat Aircraft

MR DENIS HEALEY, Secretary of State for Defence, announced that the Rolls-Royce RB 199 engine proposals have been accepted by all the countries concerned in the Multi-role Combat Aircraft (MRCA) project. The engine will be developed and produced by a joint company consisting of Rolls-Royce, Motoren und Turbinen of Germany and Fiat, and an initial contract had already been placed with this new company. Mr Healey said that he was not able to give the costs of the project. (Oral answers, October 15.)

Virology

SIR WALTER BROMLEY-DAVENPORT asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there were any proposals to carry out experiments with Blue Tongue, an African cattle virus, at the Animal Virus Research Institute at Pirbright. Mr Cledwyn Hughes replied that the consent of both himself and the Secretary of State for Scotland is needed before the institute can start fresh work on viruses capable of setting up infectious diseases in animals, and that they had both informed the Agricultural Research Council and the institute that they were not prepared to take the risk of introducing the virus into the country, even for research. (Written answer, October 15.)

Royal Society

MR GERRY FOWLER, Minister of State for Education and Science, replying to Mr Arthur Dodds-Parker, who inquired about the financial support being given to the Royal Society's plans to further contacts with Western and Eastern European countries, said that the way in which the society spends its own grant-in-aid is largely its own affair. However, £110,000 of the current grant of £871,000 is being used to fund fellowships to western European countries, and a substantial proportion of a further £96,000 grant, for travelling expenses and to send delegates to overseas conferences, is being devoted to Europe. (Written answer, October 16.)

Select Committees

MR FRED PEART, Lord President of the Council, introduced proposals to reform the select committee system, including a transformation of the Estimates Committee into a select committee for expenditure. The Government intends to publish a White Paper on public expenditure each autumn which will be debated in the House of Commons for two days.