

British and French governments in 1968. Grant and Partners will not, however, be the first with this suggestion for a channel crossing; an Englishman named Wylson put forward a plan similar in principle in 1855.

The disadvantages of an application of the Grant design to a channel crossing may, however, be overwhelming. In particular the high channel current would probably make the 30 km long structure difficult to secure properly and the chances of a ship sinking on top of it might not be entirely negligible.

ATOMIC ENERGY

Australia Enters the Atomic Age

THE first commercial nuclear reactor in Australia will soon be built at the Jervis Bay site in New South Wales. The 18th annual report of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) therefore places considerable emphasis on the advances made by Australian research teams on the necessary technical support for setting up a nuclear power industry. It seems that good progress has been made in determining safety procedures, studying the problem of corrosion in the pipes through which hot water passes ("hot" both in terms of temperature and radioactivity), and in designing fuel tubes and systems for reprocessing used fuel to recover any fissionable remnants. But an additional major boost to Australian research may be provided by the access to European gas centrifuge technology which is included in the tender offered by the Nuclear Power Group of the UK, for the Jervis Bay reactor (see *Nature*, 228, 598; 1970).

Work on the Jervis Bay site (on Commonwealth land within New South Wales) is now well advanced. Detailed studies of the ecology of the region are being carried out, and the development of Jervis Bay will be designed to interfere as little as possible with this natural ecology. Although the Commonwealth of Australia will own the station, overall responsibility for its development and operation lies with the AAEC and the Electricity Commission of New South Wales. But the Commonwealth remains responsible for the supply and disposal (or reprocessing) of fuel.

The supply of fuel in Australia seems more than adequate for the country's immediate needs. The Rum Jungle mining and processing development, which has provided the major single industry in the Northern Territory during the past two decades, is likely to close down in April 1971, but recent exploration has revealed other sources amounting to more than 25 thousand short tons of uranium oxide. About one half of this should be recoverable, at a cost of less than \$10 (US) per pound.

In spite of being overshadowed to some extent by the recent commercial developments, the AAEC's research interests have been maintained and extended. The HIFAR reactor (now 12 years old) is still operating, providing a test bed and a source of both short lived isotopes for research and long lived isotopes for medical use—production of isotopes is now at a level twice that of a year ago.

In all, the continued expansion of Australian interest in atomic energy is clearly shown by both research developments and the commercial proposals of the past year.

Parliament in Britain

Geneva Protocol

THE government has no intention of altering the policy adopted by the previous government of considering lachrymatory gases to be outside the scope of the Geneva Protocol. Asked by Mr Hugh Jenkins whether the government will seek agreement to a clarification amendment to the Geneva Protocol removing any doubt that the prohibition of chemical and biological weapons extends to the use in war of lachrymatory gases, Mr Anthony Royale, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, replied with a cursory "No". (Written answers, December 9.)

Teacher Training Inquiry

THE committee of inquiry looking into the training of teachers, which was announced in the Queen's speech, has now been appointed. Mrs Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education and Science, announced last week that the members of the committee will be Miss Elizabeth Aggett, headmistress of Eveline Lowe Primary School, London; Dr Harry Judge, headmaster, Banbury School; Mr Patrick Milroy, chief education officer, Gloucestershire County Council; Mr James Porter, principal of Berkshire College of Education, and Professor Roger Webster, professor of education at the University of Wales. Lord James of Rusholme will be chairman of the committee.

The terms of reference of the committee will be as follows:

To inquire into the present arrangements for the education, training and probation of teachers in England and Wales, and in particular to examine:

(i) what should be the content and organization of courses to be provided;

(ii) whether a larger proportion of intending teachers should be educated with students who have not chosen their career or chosen other careers;

(iii) what, in the context of (i) and (ii) above, should be the role of the maintained and voluntary colleges of education, the polytechnics and other further education institutions maintained by local education authorities, and the universities;

and to make recommendations.

The committee will begin its inquiry early next year, and should complete its investigations within twelve months. (Written answers, December 8.)

European Space Research Organization

IN an adjournment debate on ESRO raised by Mr Tam Dalyell, Mr Frederick Corfield, the Minister for Aviation Supply, reviewed the recent ministerial space conference held in Brussels and described the result as fairly unsatisfactory. It would have been wrong, however, to have achieved collaboration by having a pistol at one's head. Mr Corfield went on to say that the government continues to be willing and anxious to support the studies on application satellites. The government should accept the reports of these studies which are scheduled to appear from June onwards next year. (Debate, December 8.)