

approval of the potash mining activities in the North Yorks Moors National Park, of the scheme for a reservoir at Meldon in the Dartmoor National Park, and of the route of the M40 motorway (London to Oxford) through the Chiltern Hills.

Referring to the potash workings, the commission repeats its concern about the way in which public money could be used to aid private enterprise developments which conflict with the purposes of a national park, and it also questions the national need for three separate companies to exploit so rapidly the potash deposits. The commission's next important battle will be to oppose the building by the Central Electricity Generating Board of a new 1,300 MW power station at Insworke Point near Plymouth, a site which the commission will say at the enquiry next February is a "beautiful and sensitive area of countryside and coast which ought to be conserved and protected from large scale industrial intrusions".

The report also mentions the Arnside-Barrow link road in the north-west of England. This route, chosen by the Ministry of Transport, would run through an area of coast and countryside in the Arnside/Silverdale area which the commission decided in 1967 should be designated an area of outstanding natural beauty. After considering an independent consultant's report on the proposed new road, the commission made history by objecting to the proposal at the public enquiry held earlier this month. It condemned the proposal as misconceived, and claimed that the road would be substandard, create noise and pollution in the countryside and effect only an "absurdly small" saving in time for traffic travelling to Furness from the A6 and M6.

The commission also reports that more than 100,000 visitors called at the Lake District National Park Centre near Windermere during its first full season. And in the Peak District National Park, the traffic management scheme, which was started last July in the Goyt Valley, received almost unanimous approval. Visitors to the valley were persuaded to leave their cars, and were taken into the valley area in minibuses. The success of this scheme may pave the way for similar experiments in other national parks.

CONSERVATION

Balancing the Water Budget

from our Soviet Correspondent

THE Supreme Soviet of the USSR has adopted new legislation governing water usage and water conservation to take effect from September 1, 1971. The law covers all water resources in the Soviet Union—rivers, lakes, reservoirs, inland seas and territorial waters for industrial, agricultural, fishing, transport, power production, fur-producing, cooling, effluent removal, recreational and other purposes. Although the preliminary paragraphs of the law note that state ownership of the water resources of the USSR creates favourable conditions for optimum planning and use, a considerable number of the 46 articles of the law seem to be aimed at resolving the conflicting demands of different sectors of the community. Under the new legislation, all water resources are to be the subject of measures against pollution, blockage and depletion.

Although penalties for infringement have not yet been published, special attention is drawn to the possible pollution of reservoirs and lakes by the fouling of their winter ice cover. All existing sources of industrial pollution are to be "liquidated", and no new projects—factories and so on—can be commissioned unless they are equipped with anti-pollution devices.

In addition to pollution, the law also forbids waste and uneconomic use of water, because for some years the availability of the water resources of the USSR have been causing concern. The new law discusses means of government assessment of total and accessible water resources, and emphasizes the need for proper maintenance of a balanced water economy for the basins, economic regions and Union Republics of the USSR. Anti-erosion measures for preserving this balance are especially emphasized and the law also provides for the rapid introduction into the water-budget of any underground reserves which may be brought to light as a result of mining or oil and gas drilling operations.

SEA BED

Exploitation Rights

ALTHOUGH oceans and seas cover some 360 thousand km² of the Earth's surface, with an average depth of about 3,700 m, exploitation of their vast potential is only just beginning. A symposium on the exploration and exploitation of the sea bed and its subsoil, held in Strasbourg earlier this month, was organized by the Council of Europe as a first step towards a possible unified European effort to tap this reservoir of potential wealth.

Although the symposium came to few conclusions, there was valuable discussion of the legal position regarding ownership of the sea bed. The present position is confused, despite the Geneva Convention of 1958 (now ratified by more than 40 countries) covering ownership of the continental shelf. Many countries have already granted licences for oil exploration in areas well out to sea in the oceans bordering their coastlines—this is taken as making *a priori* claims to the ownership of mineral rights in these areas. In Europe, with a large number of countries bordering a small amount of sea, the legal problems are of very great importance, as has been shown by the recent dispute over just which parts of the North Sea should be allocated to West Germany.

But the legal problems still remain largely theoretical for the greater part of the Earth's oceans, and there is urgent need of formal international agreement. Reporting to the symposium, Professor W. H. van Eek suggests that within a few years divers will be able to work usefully down to at least 200 metres, the depth below which even major surface storms have no influence on the local environment.

Discussions are now taking place at the UN about this problem, but national governments in general are very ill informed. A full report of the Council of Europe's symposium will be put before the council's Parliamentary Assembly in January 1971, after which precise recommendations for the establishment and terms of reference of a European Ocean Space Commission and an Institute for Ocean Studies could be made. If this results in a wider understanding of the