l'Energie Atomique and French industry as part of the agency's study programme on isotopic batteries. A small quantity of ^{238}Pu provides thermal power which in turn produces about 200 μW of electric power from a semiconductor thermoelectric converter. Isotopic batteries also have other potential medical uses, principally in the development of smaller and more dependable hearing aids. The battery study group has also borne in mind the more general applications of such batteries (in wrist watches, for example) and has laid down rigorous guidelines for the manufacture and testing of the isotope containers. The agency is also maintaining its interest in all aspects of radiation safety.

The legal implications of the carriage of nuclear substances, especially by sea, have continued to occupy the agency throughout 1969–70. Although some clarification of the liabilities of nuclear operators whose property is being transported was made in the Paris Liability Convention which came into force in 1968, shipowners, for example, can still be held liable under maritime conventions. The agency group on third party liability has started consultations with the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization and the International Maritime Committee in an effort to rationalize the situation. Meanwhile, the insurance and financial guarantees now required by shipowners have assumed a magnitude which can only be provided by governments themselves.

The Eurochemic Company, which specializes in the reprocessing of nuclear fuels, has had its life extended to 1975, and discussions have started on a project to study the acceptability of foodstuffs sterilized by irradiation treatment. Some preliminary planning of future disposals of radioactive waste in the deep Atlantic has followed the operations which took place in 1967 and 1969.

LOCH MORAR

Elusive Monster

For those who like their Celtic myths lightly spiced with scientific respectability, the report of the 1970 Loch Morar Survey should prove eminently satisfactory. The report, presented at a press conference this week, emphatically and categorically states that "nothing in the results of the biological survey has so far ruled out the possibility that a large predatory species could be supported in the loch". The uncomfortable fact that not a single shred of sound scientific evidence for the existence of such a creature emerged during the five weeks that the survey team spent watching the loch this summer seems almost too trivial to contrast with the plethora of sightings which were collected to bear witness to its presence.

Between 5,000 and 7,000 years ago Loch Morar was an inland arm of the sea located on what is now the western seaboard of southwest Inverness. As the coastline rose—a geological process which still continues to the extent of about 1 mm a year—so the loch became almost entirely cut off from the sea. It now boasts the distinction of being the deepest freshwater lake in Britain, 309 metres at its maximum. Tales of a monster roaming its watery depths have been legion since time immemorial, but the legends received considerable impetus from the report in August, 1969, that two men motor-boating on the loch collided with a large object moving at between 20 and 30 mph. The object sank out of sight when fired upon.

The purpose of the 1970 survey was primarily to assess the reliability of all eye-witness accounts of the monster, and secondarily to make some contribution to an understanding of the ecology of the loch. The second objective seems to have been achieved and to have established that the loch could certainly support a tribe of large creatures. As for the primary objective, twenty-seven reliable accounts have been collated suggesting that the creature, if it exists, is between 20 and 40 feet long, with a long outstretched neck and a small snake-like head. All this, of course, sounds remarkably like the many reports of the equally elusive species which are said to inhabit Loch Ness. Unlike the Loch Ness Investigation, however, which received so much publicity earlier this year, the Morar survey has neither photographs nor sonar readings to back up its suspicions. What it all boils down to is that this year's survey on Lochs Ness and Morar has left the game in the same state of play as they found it; a hint of mystery and a whiff of monster. It is on such hazy foundations that the loch legends survive.

CONSERVATION

Council's Fortunes Improve

Natural history societies which occupy themselves chiefly with coach tours in the summer and illustrated lectures in the winter have been urged to venture out into the field by the chairman of the Council for Nature, Mr E. Milne-Redhead. Such societies, he says in his introduction to the council's latest report (*Working for Nature*), are of little use to the conservation movement. Their members should be filling the urgent need for more field naturalists.

County naturalists' trusts with conservation in mind cannot formulate management plans for nature reserves unless they know what there is to be managed, and this is where the local field workers can help. Mr Milne-Redhead urges local enthusiasts to acquire an interest in a particular group of animals or plants, obtain the relevant handbook and get down to work. Before long they will be sufficiently knowledgeable to start recording the species to be found in their regions.

Mr Milne-Redhead is writing in the first report since the constitution of the Council for Nature was changed to replace an executive committee by a properly constituted council, representing the various voluntary conservation and natural history organizations in the United Kingdom. He agrees with his predecessor, Sir Landsborough Thomson, that the council has been in a much stronger position since the changes came into effect, and he reports several improvements in the council's fortunes. The news bulletin, *Habitat*, which appeared every two months during 1969 as an economy measure, became monthly again in 1970. This change has been part of a thorough revitalization of the council's information service, which is obviously central to the task of coordinating the voluntary natural history movement.

During the year the plans to establish the Conservation Corps as an independent charitable trust were completed, and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers was launched in April. This body will chiefly further the aims and work of the Conservation