

the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy is willing to increase its widely spread bets is, however, a moot point, but it was clear last week that key members of the committee are more ready at present to back the breeder reactor.

PESTICIDES

A Few Loopholes

by our Washington Correspondent

IF a bill passed last week by the House of Representatives finds its way to the statute books, the federal government will for the first time have the power to regulate and control the manufacture and use of pesticides. At present, federal controls on pesticides apply only to their labelling and to their sale across state lines. But the squeals of anguish that might be expected from the chemicals companies and from the powerful farming lobby at such a prospect have been drowned by the protests of environmentalists.

Environmentalists charge, with some justification, that the bill is a toothless shadow of legislation introduced into Congress earlier this year by the Administration, and that it contains some important loopholes for chemicals manufacturers. Spokesmen for the chemical industry are, however, much less willing to comment on the bill except to admit that it will be easier to live with than the Administration's original proposals.

In its present form, the bill establishes the important concept that the Environmental Protection Agency should have the right to inspect manufacturing facilities, which would be registered with the agency, examine records and take samples. And, as far as pesticide use is concerned, the bill requires that all pesticides be registered with the EPA, which would classify them as either for general use or for restricted use. As for enforcement, controls on the manufacture or use of pesticides would be enforced by the states, and the EPA's regulatory arm would be stiffened by powers allowing it to bring court injunctions, impose civil penalties, seize unlawful products or bring criminal charges against violators.

There are also provisions in the bill for public comments on any action taken during registration of a pesticide, or during the proceedings that follow cancellation or suspension of an agent's registration. Questions of scientific fact would be referred to the National Academy of Sciences, in much the same way as under the existing law, but the new bill also allows a scientific review to take place in conjunction with a public hearing, while the existing law separates the two procedures, thereby causing undue delay.

All that, of course, raises few objec-

tions among environmentalists, for it considerably stiffens existing laws, and allows for at least a minimum set of standards to be enforced on the manufacture and use of pesticides. In that respect, it represents a considerable step from the present law which only gives the federal government powers to enforce labelling standards, and to ban or restrict the sale of pesticides between different states. But environmentalists are concerned both by other provisions that found their way into the bill, and by some concessions that chemicals manufacturers managed to wring from the Agriculture committee before it reported the bill to the House.

One bone of contention is that the Administration's original proposals called for the classification of pesticides into three categories, the last one being for use by permit only. This was deleted by the committee on the grounds that it would be too difficult to enforce, and means that some of the most toxic chemicals would instead come under the less rigorous controls imposed on the "restricted use" category in the present bill. Another proposal which has irked critics of the chemicals industry is the provision written into the bill for paying federal money to manufacturers who are left with considerable quantities of pesticide on their hands in the event that a pesticide's registration is cancelled. This provision was bitterly attacked when the bill was debated in the House, on the grounds that the government would effectively be paying industry for its own mistakes. But in the event, an amendment to delete the provision was rejected by a wide margin.

The Agriculture committee also wrote into the bill the provisions for scientific review by committees of the National Academy of Sciences. According to one member of the committee, this provision was put into the bill at the insistence of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the committee held a special session to draft it into the bill. Congressman John Dow, chief spokesman against the bill on the floor of the House, and also a member of the Agriculture committee, insists, however, that such a scientific review can be effectively used by chemicals manufacturers to hold up proceedings, and moved to have the provision deleted from the bill. His amendment was rejected by a voice vote, however. The National Academy of Sciences itself would also have been happy to see its name removed from the bill, since such a provision tends to erode its independence from the government.

All these arguments are likely to have a second showing early next session, when the Senate should be voting on companion legislation. So far, a Senate committee has conducted hearings on

the Administration's bill, but no bill has been sent to the Senate itself.

HEALTH MANPOWER

Plugging the Gap

by our Washington Correspondent

THE House of Representatives last week sent to President Nixon a bill providing \$2,900 million over the next three years for the training of doctors. The bill is the product of protracted negotiations in a conference committee which was set the difficult task of reconciling differences between fundamentally different bills passed in August by the House of Representatives and the Senate. Chief intent of the bill is to increase the numbers of doctors in the United States, particularly in areas where there are substantial shortages.

The bill now awaiting the President's signature, although it involves expenditures considerably in excess of the modest proposals sent to Congress earlier this year by the Administration, is expected to meet with little resistance in the Administration. The bill authorizes construction grants to medical schools, totalling \$225 million in 1972, \$250 million in 1973 and \$275 million in 1975. Medical schools would also receive federal funds on the basis of their student enrolment, with grants of \$2,500 for each student in his first, second and third year, \$4,000 for students in their fourth year, and as an incentive for schools to shorten courses, the bill provides for the schools to receive \$8,500 for every student in the final year of a three-year course.

Another incentive for existing schools to step up their output of medical students is a provision in the bill which seeks to make a substantial grant to colleges which usually provide two-year courses in basic medical science. Such schools that convert to four-year medical schools will, under the terms of the bill, receive grants of \$50,000 multiplied by the numbers of medical students enrolled in their first third year class. As for student support, the bill set aside \$50 million next year, rising to \$60 million in 1974 for loans to students in the health professions.

The House version of the original bill was produced by the Interstate and Foreign commerce subcommittee, under the chairmanship of Paul G. Rogers, while the Senate version was sponsored by Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Both sponsors declared themselves pleased with the conference committee bill, and the final bill received widespread support in both chambers. In the House, where it only collected three opposing votes, only one member was prepared to speak up against it. His chief grievance was that the bill is the first step on the road to socialized medicine.