

In December last year, a total ban on whale fishing by US vessels and on the import of whale goods was brought into effect, and the House of Representatives defeated a bill seeking to protect other species of ocean mammals because it was too weak, and at the time there was no chance for Congressmen to amend it. Last week, however, they had their chance when the bill was brought up for a second time, and the chance was not missed. A provision calling for a five-year moratorium on the killing of all ocean mammals (albeit with a few loopholes) and on the import into the United States of all marine mammal products was tacked on to the bill before it was passed by a lopsided margin of 362 to 10. Similar legislation was also the subject of hearings before the Senate Commerce Committee.

In addition to declaring a moratorium on the killing of marine mammals, the bill sets up within the Commerce Department a three-man commission, advised by a scientific committee, to review the condition of stocks of marine mammals and to advise the Secretary of Commerce and the Congress on the workings of the act.

When the bill was first brought before the House of Representatives in December, it was essentially a measure calling for better management of marine resources, rather than an outright protection device. Its central theme, for example, was that the Secretary of Commerce would issue permits for the killing of marine mammals on a commercial basis, although permits would not be issued for endangered species, and the issue of any permit would be subject to public hearings. The bill, however, came in for a barrage of criticism from the press for being too weak, the most commonly heard criticism being that the Commerce Department is too susceptible to industrial pressure to provide sufficient guarantee of protection to marine mammals. With the history of the International Whaling Commission's patent inability to prevent the demise of the blue whale as ammunition, public opinion had sufficient fire power to shoot it down.

The bill that was passed last week, however, calls for a five-year moratorium on the killing of marine mammals before any such permits are issued, although there are a few important exceptions to the blanket ban. Permits would still be issued for taking marine mammals for scientific research or for zoological gardens provided that such action does not constitute too grave a threat to the species; there is no outright ban on the incidental capture of porpoises and dolphins during tuna fishing, provided that adequate precautions are taken to prevent these mammals from being trapped in the tuna nets; and

finally the bill allows continued capture of the North Pacific fur seal under the conditions of an existing treaty signed by the governments of the United States, Japan, Canada and the Soviet Union. Morris Udall of Arizona and David Pryor of Arkansas, chief sponsors of the amendment calling for the moratorium, both suggested that they would prefer a blanket ban, but that such a goal is not politically possible this year.

The moratorium, if it survives the rest of the Congressional mill, will have at least one potentially large effect on international negotiations for the preservation of marine mammals: United States representatives can now approach such negotiations free from vested commercial interests. As Rogers C. B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior, said when he announced the US moratorium on whale fishing: "We are in a position to provide leadership in the world wide drive to preserve the whale as a vital part of the marine ecosystem." That leadership can now be turned to other equally threatened species which are being killed either in the name of "sport" or for luxury products for which there are adequate substitutes.

POLLUTION

The Cleaning Bill

by our Washington Correspondent

WHILE the interminable debate about the merits of economic growth has been raging in the popular and scientific press, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council on Environmental Quality have been looking into the likely effects of present pollution control requirements. They have found that, as expected, federal pollution abatement standards are likely to depress the growth in gross national product, increase prices and cause a few plants to shut down. But the overriding finding is that these effects will not be severe, and they will not result in unbearable costs in individual industries.

The EPA and CEQ studies, made public this week, were carried out by private consultants on the basis of assumptions and constraints supplied by the agencies. Fourteen studies were made on the likely economic impact of pollution control requirements on individual industries between 1972 and 1976, and one estimate was made of the effect of pollution control on the entire economy between 1972 and 1980. The assumptions, however, inevitably cast a few shadows of doubt on the findings. For example, no account was taken of the likely effects of the sulphur tax proposed recently by the Administra-

tion, and as far as water quality standards are concerned, the estimates were made on the basis that corporations would be forced to use "the best practicable" technology, rather than the more stringent requirement of "the best available" technology that is likely to be stipulated in the bills now before Congress.

Nevertheless, the estimates for the economy as a whole are that pollution standards will cost industry some \$26,000 million over the 1972-80 period, thereby pushing up prices, especially in the early part of the decade when installation costs are greatest, and decreasing the rate of growth of the gross national product by some 0.1 per cent over the entire period. Unemployment is also expected to be increased by between 0.1 and 0.2 per cent a year because of pollution control requirements. None of these effects is, however, likely to be too keenly felt, and they can mostly be offset by compensatory policies. But such policies, the report indicates, would tend to push up prices by some 3 per cent a year, and consequently affect adversely the trade balance.

The estimated effects on individual industries are, however, perhaps more revealing. The first thing to be said is that no industry will be severely affected, although profits will naturally decline for corporations which cannot pass on the full cost of pollution control. Four industries—paper, steel, petroleum and electric utilities—are expected to invest more than \$1,000 million each during the 1972-76 period, with electricity utilities the hardest hit with an investment of between \$8,000 and \$11,000 million.

Over all the industries studied, some 200 to 300 plants are expected to be forced to close by the additional costs of pollution control, but the reports make clear that "the vast majority of these were likely to have closed in the 1976-1980 period in any case". These closures are expected to result in the loss of between 50,000 and 125,000 jobs, which will substantially affect some 50 to 150 communities. The worst affected industries turn out to be fruit and vegetable canning and processing, paper and iron foundries.

One important point about the estimates is that they take no account of the likely benefits, both hidden and direct, of pollution control, and they make no attempt to calculate the effect of similar processes in other countries—a factor which will have a substantial effect on the balance of payments.

It is indeed appropriate that the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council on Environmental Quality have instigated these investigations at a time when the effect of pollution control on the gross national product is uppermost in people's minds.