

a local system of weights and measures, the law was extremely harsh on these men. Nor could any respite be obtained for them when the UN team pointed out that the excess area planted was in fact very small, and that officialdom as much as growers had made a mistake. The official argument has been that the arrest of the offenders will emphasise that the government really does mean business, and that to release them will bring the law into disrepute. Each must wait till the law has run its course; but if he can show that a mistake was genuinely made, he will eventually be released and granted a licence to grow poppies again, which would not otherwise be the case.

Meanwhile, the area any one farmer may cultivate has increased to a maximum of 5 decares from the permitted area in 1975 of 2 decares, which many farmers considered was too small to

be worthwhile. But it looks as though most of the farmers who have suffered arrest will not have had their cases heard in time for this year's sowing.

As far as the mechanics of the control system are concerned, the government programme seems to have been well organised and implemented. A number of 5-man teams were set up to inspect and control cultivation, and they are backed by 80 teams of gendarmes for detailed inspection. Vehicles for these teams have been provided through UN funds, and the same source of finance is being used to set up a telecommunications network between such major centres in the poppy-growing area as Afyon and Konya and the mobile inspection teams.

Other UN assistance is directed towards providing equipment for laboratories in Turkey for morphine

detection, carrying out training in this field at the Narcotics Laboratory in Geneva and training law enforcement personnel. The funds have also been used initially to underwrite a good guaranteed price for farmers. In 1975 they received 17 Turkish lira a kilogram for poppy "straw" and retained the seed which is their main interest. Although research is in hand to evolve more productive varieties of poppy in terms of both seed and morphine content, it is also hoped that eventually more farmers will turn to other crops, in accordance with official plans for the overall development of the areas concerned. Finally, plans are well advanced, again with UN advice and assistance, for the establishment within Turkey of a processing plant to handle the poppy straw which is now the main export product of the former opium-producing region. □

THE energy plan proposed last summer by the Minister for Industry, Sr Donat-Cattin, was approved on December 23 by the CIPE, the inter-ministerial committee for economic programming. The crux of Sr Donat-Cattin's plan is to supplement the three nuclear power stations already in existence with twenty or more by 1985, which will double the country's electricity production capacity.

In the heated debate over the plan this autumn, one of the most frequent criticisms has been that Italy will simply replace its dependence on the oil-producing countries with one on the uranium-producing countries, without gaining anything. It is also felt that the tremendous increase in capacity, which assumes growth of 4-5% a year, is unnecessary. The electricity board (ENEL) has countered this by pointing out that in the sharp recession of 1975 consumption decreased by only 1% of 1974 consumption, and claims that its plans are flexible enough to be adjusted in the future if necessary.

The US companies Westinghouse and General Electric are to build the 1,000 MW water-cooled reactors, and this has not pleased the Italian trade unions. Italian companies would, in fact, have been capable of doing a large part of the construction work, greatly relieving the balance of payments burden and the unemployment problem. And of course there are the worries about the safety of the US reactors.

A miniature and more furious version of the national debate has been going on in Lombardy, where Sr Donat-Cattin wants sites for two of the reactors to be found. The

regional government wants only one reactor. Instructed by the central government to find one site on the Po near Mantua and another near Lake Como, it has missed the deadline for doing either. The central government now has to choose.

## Letter from Italy

from Gillian Boucher



● What elsewhere has been reported as Italy's blocking of the EEC project for nuclear fusion research has been seen in Italy as resistance by the other EEC countries to the Italian site for the project, Ispra. The EEC Commission felt Ispra to be the most suitable site for the experimental thermonuclear plant, the Joint European Torus (JET); led by the Minister for Science, Sr Pedini, to believe that the decision was virtually final, Italians were startled by the inability of the research ministers to agree about it when they met in Brussels in December.

As enumerated by the Commission, the advantages of Ispra over its competitors—the chief of which is

Culham in the UK—include its connections with Euratom, abundant electricity, available skill, experience of safety measures, and a pleasant environment (on the shores of Lake Maggiore) with an international school. Fears that work may be interrupted by labour problems seem exaggerated; Ispra has suffered industrial action in the past, but in 1975 only 34 hours were lost through strikes. The Euratom link, however, is not an entirely positive attribute: Ispra has constantly suffered from a lack of proper organisation and last summer faced a crisis which only a special grant of 2,000 million lire from the EEC averted. If it does not win JET its future looks extremely uncomfortable.

● After centuries of shooting anything that flutters or cheeps, the Italians have suddenly become wildlife-conscious. A bill on hunting has just been approved by the Senate; when the Camera, or House of Deputies, has approved it, it will provide general principles to guide regional governments in drafting their own rules.

According to the bill anyone who wants a gun licence will in future have to pass an examination on the applied biology and zoology of hunting, the law on hunting, firearms and how to use them, and conservation. Italians wishing to shoot will be required to take out third-party insurance, a protection which can hardly make them more carefree about where they point their guns than they are at present. Wildlife reserves will be established, and what may be shot where, when, and in what numbers will be specified in detail.