

IN BRIEF

EEC at sea

Member states of the EEC, which is currently preparing itself for 200-mile community fishing limits, went to the fourth session of the Law of the Sea Conference this week still facing a problem over national limits. Responding to the resistance expressed to the idea of a 12-mile limit by James Callaghan, the UK Foreign Secretary, at the Foreign Ministers meeting a fortnight ago, the EEC Agriculture Commissioner, M Pierre Lardinois, said last week that any extension of exclusive national limits beyond 12 miles would require a reversal of the Treaty of Accession, and indicated that catch quotas might offer a means of achieving the desired end. Delegates from over 150 countries are in New York for the Law of the Sea Conference, and apart from the problem of coastal states' jurisdiction, they are expected to tackle the issue of exclusive economic zones, particularly in relation to fishing and deep-sea mining.

ABRC confirms cutbacks

Figures contained in appendices to the

second report (published this week) of the UK Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC), which advises the Minister of Education and Science on the allocation of the science budget amongst the research councils, confirms the downward trend indicated by the recent public expenditure White Paper. The distribution of the £216 million science budget for 1976-77 shows that, while overall growth in real terms will amount to 1.7%, the Science Research Council (SRC) will experience a 1.6% decline. The SRC's share of the total will fall from 54.2% now to about 52% in 1980-81. The proportion going to "big science" will fall even faster, from 34% to 27%.

Asbestos check

The UK Health and Safety Executive is reportedly investigating compliance with and enforcement of the precautions contained in the 1969 Asbestos Regulations. The immediate cause of concern is a suspected link between mesothelioma (a malignant tumour in the stomach or chest) and exposure to asbestos.

Kissinger on nuclear trade

Speaking before a Senate committee last week, the US Secretary of State, Dr Henry Kissinger, stated his opposition to specific proposals designed to tighten control of international trade in nuclear technology, and rejected suggestions that the USA and USSR should jointly urge countries like France and West Germany not to export nuclear facilities. The proposals, Dr Kissinger said, would violate the spirit of international undertakings by the US.

Uranium resources report

A report on uranium resources produced by the OECD's Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) estimates that demand for natural uranium will increase from the present 18,000 tonnes a year to about 50,000 tonnes by 1980 and possibly 100,000 tonnes by 1985. Demand up to the next decade, the report indicates, could be met, but thereafter much will also depend on recycling and prevailing prices as well as new discoveries.

ONE place in California exceeds all the rest in scenery and fame: Yosemite Valley, a national and international shrine of acclaimed splendour. Two Congressional subcommittees have just recommended that the US Interior Department take immediate action to prevent Yosemite from becoming "a major Walt Disney-type attraction". Hopefully, the analogy bodes ill for an actual plan by Disney to destroy another mountain treasure: Mineral King in the southern Sierra Nevada, where restaurants, chair-lifts and garages have been proposed.

I have not seen the report, but I know some of the circumstances leading to it such as the egregious and repulsive proposal that a tramway be built on Glacier Point. This wretched idea was turned down, but the very suggestion should have been enough to call for immediate expulsion of its proponent, the Music Corporation of America (MCA), from the concessions now assigned to MCA in Yosemite.

The Valley has been described in the prose of John Muir and the poetic photography of Ansel Adams. I can do no more than footnote their achievements. Yosemite, the goddess of fatal beauty, in spring is the deep roar of stupendous waterfalls, profusions of azaleas and dogwood blossoms, soaring sculptures in immense

granite cliffs, the fragrance of ponderosa pine trees mingled with new foliage of black oaks and green leaves of manzanita, the harsh call of dark-crested Steller jays.

Ravished goddess

THOMAS H. JUKES

A rock-climber, Yvon Chouinard, has spoken of, in summer

"the tremendous heat, the dirt-filled cracks, . . . the filth and noise of Camp 4 (the climbers' campground), and, worst of all, the multitudes of tourists . . . but then there are times when I should rather be here than anywhere else in

the world . . . It is a strange, passionate love that I feel for this Valley"

Clinging to the sun-warmed rock, high above the valley floor, a climber sees Yosemite better than anyone else. The sounds below fade to a faint murmur.

Golf courses, tennis courts, a bank, service stations and garages, barber and beauty shops, and nineteen places where liquor can be purchased, have invaded the delicate tissues of Yosemite like a festering sore. The best therapy would be debridement. All buildings could be removed by using the equipment and machinery that work so successfully for this purpose in run-down urban areas. It would, of course, defeat the basis of the restoration if visitors were kept out of the Valley, but the less agile could travel in sight-seeing buses (many do so now) and the more able-bodied could move on bicycles or on foot, thus combining the benefits of scenery and exercise. (Last October, I gave a lecture on nutrition in an auditorium in Yosemite. I should have asked the audience, in the name of John Muir to leave the building, forget the meeting and walk with me to Vernal Falls).

These changes, which are doubtless too radical to be considered, would disrupt jobs and sensibilities. But their adoption would do nothing but good to Yosemite Valley.