

defence staff, General Sverre Hamre, told the Norwegian police that he considered it a threat to the activities of Norwegian defence and national security. Having questioned the authors and PRIO staff closely associated with preparing the report, the police completed their investigations in June 1979 and sent preliminary charges against Gleditsch to the court. They charged him on three counts: two under the penal code — revealing information which ought to be kept secret in the interests of national security relative to foreign powers, and acquiring this information or making it available to others — and one under the law on defence secrets — recording, copying, or publishing sketches of fortifications or associated installations. According to Norwegian practice, the police also appointed three independent experts to evaluate the report. The intelligence service proposed two of these (one was the former head of the service) and Gleditsch and Wilkes the third. Not surprisingly, the experts nominated by the intelligence service supported General Hamre's opinion that the report threatened national security. The formal indictment charges Wilkes as well as Gleditsch with all three charges, which carry a maximum penalty of 4½ years imprisonment.

The technical intelligence facilities described in the Gleditsch-Wilkes report collect and analyse data from electronic intelligence satellites, monitor and analyse military and diplomatic radio signals, and intercept and interpret electronic and telemetric communications. Although the authorities are traditionally tight-lipped about such installations, the authors point out that it was very easy to find out about them by using, for example, the ordinary telephone directory and public lists of government-owned property. They also learned a lot by observing the installation's antennas: their size, shape and layout. The authors maintain that if the Soviet Union, with its sophisticated spy satellites and, presumably, other more traditional techniques of spying, is interested in the installations, it would already know a great deal about Norwegian security. They claim that the authorities' secrecy is mainly directed towards the Norwegian population itself, pointing to police reaction to the publication of their report in Norwegian, shortly before the trial began. For two years the report has been available in English and the police have made no attempt to confiscate it; however, they have now declared the publication of the Norwegian translation illegal.

Support for Gleditsch and Wilkes has come from the International Peace Research Association, the Norwegian Writers' Union and political youth organizations in Norway. The trial is expected to last for another week or so, and the verdict will follow a couple of weeks after that. One or both sides will almost certainly appeal.

**Wendy Barnaby**

## UK nuclear power

### Plans panned

For the second time this year, Britain's Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) has received a rap over the knuckles for not providing enough information about the economic case for its planned nuclear power programme. Hard on the heels of sharp criticism from the House of Commons Select Committee on Energy last March, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission last week published a report on the board's finances (HC 315, HMSO, £9.30). The Monopolies Commission was asked to find out whether CEGB is charging a fair price for the electricity which it supplies to the consumer through regional electricity boards.

The commission says that one of the chief reasons for the high cost of electricity in Britain is CEGB's previous tendency to invest in new plant before strictly necessary. Decisions to order new plant, it concluded, have often been based on over-

estimates of future demand, and economic cases have been made on over-optimistic estimates of construction times, capital costs and the ultimate performance of power stations.

The commission's report is particularly critical of the decision, to build the second advanced gas-cooled reactor at Heysham, taken in 1979 as part of the government's decision to embark on a further nuclear programme, probably based on the Westinghouse design of the pressurized water reactor. Failing approval at next year's public inquiry, CEGB hopes to keep open the option of basing the programme on the notoriously costly British-designed AGR by building Heysham II.

Although the commission acknowledges that CEGB has learnt from its previous mistakes with the AGR, it still criticizes the board for not providing sufficiently detailed cost estimates for Heysham II, even though the decision to build it was taken largely on strategic grounds.

The commission also faults CEGB's case for future nuclear power stations on economic grounds. It says that the board's estimate of net effective cost assumes unrealistic improvements in future construction time and operational performance. Margins of error in cost estimates, together with a better indication of the board's assumptions, should have been presented to the government when making an economic case for the nuclear programme. The board should also have compared the cost of building new nuclear stations with the cost of refurbishing old coal-fired stations.

The commission, however, has praised the way in which CEGB keeps a check on its current expenditure and seems to be impressed with the performance of its Barnwood division, unpopular with many of its contractors, in keeping a detailed check on cost increases during construction. The commission's report, however, ends on a rather gloomy note. Even if CEGB implements all its recommendations, the commission cannot foresee any substantial cut in electricity prices to the consumer.

**Judy Redfearn**

## US science funding

### Rewards of genius

#### Washington

Acting on the theory that intellectual and cultural breakthroughs can be accelerated if latent genius is permitted to flourish free of the more material considerations of making a daily living, one of the newest — and wealthiest — foundations in America has announced the first of a series of five-year, no-strings-attached awards to "exceptionally talented" individuals.

The awards are being made by the trustees of the John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation set up two years ago from the estate of the late Chicago insurance and real estate millionaire. The

## Gloom on research

A high-level meeting of research councils from Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States was held in the English country town of Abingdon on the weekend of 16-17 May. The occasion, arranged by Sir Geoffrey Allen, chairman of the British Science and Engineering Research Council, is the second in a series of consultations begun with a meeting called by Professor H. R. Leibnitz, then the president of the Deutsche Forschung Gemeinschaft in June last year.

The objective appears to have been an exchange of views, most of them gloomy. The United States participants (Dr John Slaughter and Dr H. R. Langenberg, respectively director and deputy director of the National Science Foundation) left their fellow-administrators with the impression that the Reagan budget had been a body blow whose effects will not be confined to the United States, but that the United States is also worried by more long-standing problems — the difficulty of recruiting teachers of engineering for United States universities, for example.

European participants in the meeting are said to have welcomed their transatlantic colleagues into the company of the impoverished, and to have urged that if the United States now faces a period of entrenchment it would be worthwhile thinking of collaboration with European collaborative ventures such as those at CERN. The occasion seems also to have been one for concerted European complaint about the budgetary threat to the solar polar mission, the plan to send two spacecraft (one European, one American) into polar orbits about the Sun.