Deep-sea drilling

Britain squeezed onto margins

Washington

STRAINS are beginning to show over Britain's continued inability to find the \$2.5 million membership fee needed to join the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP). British scientists have been removed from all planning and advisory committees of the programme, and according to Robert Kidd, manager of scientific operations of the research vessel *Joides Resolution*, British scientists are unlikely to be invited to participate in future cruises.

Britain at present enjoys observer status in ODP, which permits it only to send an observer to meetings of the executive committee of Joint Oceanographic Institutions Deep Earth Sampling (JOIDES). Japan, which also has observer status, recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States saying that it will join the programme as a full member at the start of October this year; no such guarantee has yet been made by Britain. As a result, the only British scientist on the current cruise of *Joides Resolution* in the Norwegian Sea, Lindsay Parsons of the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, is likely to be the last until Britain rejoins, unless there is a cruise in British territorial waters.

Planners at ODP find themselves in a political bind: although they want to invite individual British scientists because of their expertise in particular fields, it is felt that it would be unwise to send the British government a signal that its best scientists will be able to participate in ODP whether or not Britain becomes a member. The assistant programme director of ODP at the US National Science Foundation, Alexander Sutherland, says JOIDES has been "pretty adamant" that British scientists should not be offered guaranteed places, out of fairness to participating countries. Dr Parsons' participation in the current cruise, leg 104, was arranged before the JOIDES committee forbade guaranteed places for British scientists, and was supported (despite misgivings in some quarters) by the two co-chief scientists on the cruise, Olav Eldholm of the University of Oslo and Jorn Thiede of the University of Kiel.

Britain's difficulties in finding the necessary money has particularly annoyed Canada, which has paid despite having a much smaller gross national product. Although the European Science Foundation and Australia may join ODP as a consortium, JOIDES has ruled out the possibility of Britain joining as part of a consortium.

Britain's Natural Environment Research Council still hopes to be able to raise the necessary funds in time, although many people in the United States seem resigned to the fact that Britain will not be a member next year, at least. One political

factor that may yet carry the day in Britain, however, is a planned cruise in the Weddell Sea: a scientific interest and

Auto emissions

Europe agrees at last

Brussels

AFTER an all-night session, environment ministers of the European Economic Community (EEC) came to the close of their meeting in Luxembourg on 28 June just in time for breakfast with agreement on new tougher European exhaust emission controls, the first of which will be applicable from 1988.

The deadlock over this controversial issue, which has kept the environment ministers busy over one aspect or another for two years, was overcome by a decision not to follow the US example, despite pressure from West Germany, to quantify the exhaust emission limit for nitrogen oxides (NOX) on their own for cars in the intermediate range of 1.4 to 2.0 litres.

The combined figure for nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons (HC) has been common practice until now in the regular modifications made to the 1970 EEC directive on exhaust emissions, and gives motor manufacturers room for manoeuvre within a range of engineering options. In getting to grips with emissions, one of the problems in engine design is that modifications to the combustion process aimed at reducing, for example, hydrocarbon emissions increase the production of NOX and *vice versa*.

The limit finally agreed — 8 gram/test for HC and NOX together, the European Commission's proposal — falls half-way between what West Germany wanted on the one hand and what the British were prepared originally to accept on the other.

For the United Kingdom, the difficulty lay in accepting a figure that it might be impossible to obtain using lean-burn single-point ignition, under development in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the use of this technology (lean-burn plus oxidation catalyst) had been part of the agreement hammered out by environment ministers at their previous meeting in March. As it turned out, Mr William Waldegrave, Under Secretary of State at the UK Department of the Environment, agreed on his own responsibility to the

presence in Antarctica would undoubtedly bolster British negotiating positions when the Antarctic Treaty comes up for renegotiation at the end of the decade. Only by being in at the planning stages will Britain be able to influence the shape of the cruise.

Tim Beardsley

figure pending a government decision in London. No hitches are expected.

This spirit of European compromise has meant less of a warm welcome from environmentalists in West Germany for their interior minister Friedrich Zimmermann, for whom coherence in the Community's external market, at the end of the day, outweighed tough political pressure on a national level.

Ministers also accepted a number of other ancillary points, said to have been initially proposed by French environment minister Hugue Bouchardeau, which aim at further reducing exhaust pollution (and tension between the member states):

- That small cars (under 1.4 litre) would have to conform earlier to stricter standards, bringing them in line with US environmental equivalent effects, by 1992 for new models and 1993 for all new cars.

- That the United Kingdom and France would agree to drop complaints made to the European Commission against the national fiscal incentives for "clean cars" announced by West Germany at a time when European legislation on the subject was being prepared (illegal under Community law).

- That the Commission should propose legislation in the next three months to limit emissions from lorries, and in particular on diesel particulates (see *Nature*, 311, 401; 1984). Ministers also laid down new standards for diesel engines with a capacity of 2 litres and over. While, in the past, limits for diesel engines have had the advantage of a 25 per cent waiver in their favour, they will in the future have to comply with the same new limits established for the intermediate range of conventional car engines.

- That the Commission should make proposals on speed limits and on a regular monitoring system on vehicle compliance, possibly based on the tough system applied in Belgium.

In addition, the Commission itself may decide to propose further measures.

Anna Lubinska

	Emission standards		Deadline (1 October)	
	CO	HC + NOX	New models	New cars
Cars over 2 litres	25	6.5 (3.5 NOX)	1988	1989
Cars of 1.4-2 litres	30	8.0	1991	1993
Cars below 1.4 litres	45	15.0 (6.0 NOX)	1990	1991

(Stage 1)

(Stage 2 to be agreed in 1987 with implementation by 1992-93.)