

research and technology

bulletin published by the press and information services
of the commission of the european communities

REPRODUCTION AUTHORIZED

Brussels, 2 November 1969

No. 31

** The United Kingdom's joining the Community would tend to strengthen scientific capability, market conditions, the competitive position and the possibilities for the development of research in the Community. This is the view expressed by the Commission in the Annex to the Opinion which it recently passed to the Council of Ministers concerning the prospects of enlarging the Community, for it is clear that an enlarged Community, in view of its size, would be a more appropriate setting for the implementation of development programmes in research and technology. With particular regard to the nuclear field, the Commission recalled the scale of the United Kingdom's facilities: an isotope separation plant, 31 research reactors, 29 power reactors with a total installed capacity of 5,353 MWe at the end of 1969 (compared with 21 power reactors having a total installed power of 3,191 MWe in the Community), etc.

** The European Communities Statistics Office went further ahead in 1968 with its analysis of the data on enriched uranium supplied by the United States Atomic Energy Commission (USAEC). The USAEC has a monopoly in the production of enriched uranium in the United States and is virtually the Community's sole source of supply.

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20258/X/69-e

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A comparison between the orders placed in 1968 and previous years shows up an abrupt fall: 3,897 kg of uranium-235 in 1967 and only 572 kg in 1968, including orders from non-member countries. The decline stems from the almost complete cessation of orders for enriched uranium for power reactors and a substantial drop in orders earmarked for research reactors.

There was also a decrease in the degree of refinement of the enriched uranium for which orders were placed. In 1968 virtually all the orders were for hexafluoride, i.e., the basic product leaving the enrichment plants.

It should be emphasised, however, that these statistics must be weighted to take account of the fact that orders may be executed over two different periods and the market is still small and tends to move sporadically, as dictated by research trends and the tempo at which new types of reactor are tested.

** As part of the scheme run by the Commission of the European Communities to promote the exchange of experience between operators of nuclear power plants, about a hundred specialists, representing the operators of 25 nuclear power plants in the Community, were brought together in Brussels by the Commission on 23 and 24 October. During this meeting, the third of its kind since 1966, it was suggested that henceforth these exchanges of experience should be extended to non-member countries, notably the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, Spain and the Scandinavian countries and that, in addition to technical problems, more general matters, such as the training of nuclear plant operating staff, should be tackled.

** Thirteen applications for financial assistance submitted to the Commission of the European Communities by various public and private bodies with a view to the carrying-out of research relating to coal, steel and safety at work are now under consideration, and the Council of Ministers

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should give a decision on them shortly. The amounts involved in these 13 applications for assistance (seven for research relating to coal, four to steel and two to safety at work) total about \$8 million, approximately 60% of the total cost of the planned research projects.

** The recycling of plutonium in thermal reactors was the topic of a briefing held in October in Brussels and at the Geel establishment of the Joint Research Centre. The meeting was organized by the Commission of the European Communities in order to inform interested circles in the Community without delay of the results of several research contracts placed by the Commission in this field. It was also the occasion for a review of the work done over the past ten years in an area in which it is unanimously felt that the experience built up in the Community is broadly comparable with that of the English-speaking countries, as regards both the physics of plutonium-bearing lattices and fuel fabrication.

** The use of prestressed concrete for the construction of vessels for high-temperature reactors will be the subject of a briefing to be held by the Commission of the European Communities in Brussels from 18 to 20 November 1969. Over a hundred specialists both from Community and several non-member countries will take part in this important event.

** Over 150 specialists, both from the Community Member States and from non-member countries, are to take part in the symposium to be held in Luxembourg on 13 and 14 November by the Commission of the European Communities on the problem of ground pressures in the light of the increasing mechanization of coal mines.