

Two hurdles remain for breeder funding

How much to authorize for next year's spending on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor has been a thorny problem for congress. Early on, President Carter indicated he wanted breeder spending reduced from an estimated \$237.6 million this year to a mere \$33 million for 1978—funding so low that it could in essence kill the program. After heated debate, the House authorized \$150 million, enough to keep the program both alive and healthy. The Senate settled on \$75 million.

Last week House and Senate leaders met in a conference committee to iron out budget differences between their bills for the Energy Research and Development Administration. When it came to the breeder, conferees compromised on an \$80 million figure. The question remains, however, whether Carter will buy the compromise or veto the entire authorization bill as he has threatened to do if the breeder program is not seriously cut.

NUCLEONICS WEEK, a New York based newsletter, quotes nuclear industry sources as saying that "based on the President's problems with Bert Lance and his energy bills before the Senate, and on his 'desire to create good will over the Panama Canal treaty,' prospects for a veto are 'extremely remote.'"

A new provision in this year's ERDA authorization bill could assure administration support for the breeder. It would permit the government to charge utilities for uranium enrichment services at prices that reflect the kinds of profit and tax considerations that a commercial firm would ask—thereby substantially increasing enrichment revenues. Conferees hope that Carter may compromise his breeder stance because he wants commercial pricing and certain other bill provisions, such as the authority to guarantee loans for programs such as those that develop synthetic fuels.

A second snag to breeder funding is parliamentary. Morris Udall (D-Ariz.), chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, says a provision introduced into the ERDA authorization bill by the conference committee limits the regulatory function of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). In a letter to Olin Teague (D-Texas), conference committee chairman, Udall says, "Your conference committee . . . specifies that only radiological health and safety must be considered" in breeder licensing. "Elimination of common defense and national security considerations is wholly inconsistent" with NRC's statutory responsibilities.

If Udall raises this objection when the bill comes to the House floor, parliamentarians in the House and Senate must be called in to resolve it before the bill can be acted on. Their decisions, however, may be appealed. □

The Zamora case: TV gets a reprieve

It was the kind of flashy, unorthodox defense that seemed to fit the reputation of Miami attorney Ellis Rubin. And it might, just might, be 15-year-old Ronny Zamora's ticket to salvation, Rubin and his associates reasoned.

There are an estimated 2,300 studies linking televised violence to aggression, "and we collected a very large number of those," said Nelson Faerber Jr., Rubin's top legal aide. The evidence was gathered in an attempt to prove that Zamora was "involuntarily intoxicated" by TV when he shot and killed an 82-year-old woman.

Rubin might as well have tried to surf on waveless Biscayne Bay. Judge Paul Baker would allow as evidence—along with psychiatric examination reports of Zamora—only study results that linked specific TV shows to specific acts of violence. "There are no such studies," Rubin allowed, and the jury convicted Zamora of first degree murder. The trial was televised in Florida.

An appeal will be requested, based on allowing some of the mountains of data on TV violence to be presented in court, Faerber told SCIENCE NEWS. If a new trial comes about, it will most likely touch off what Baker successfully avoided—a lengthy, complicated debate that could ultimately decide the fate not only of Ronny Zamora, but of future television.

The amount of data on televised violence's effects on children is voluminous, and has prompted groups such as the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association to express public concern about potential dangers (SN: 4/23/77, p. 261).

Since 1970, the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development has studied the reactions of 5,000 youngsters to various types of TV programming. Results indicate that TV can, and does, transmit physically violent acts to children, but does little to convey the meaning or the consequences of such acts. Minnesota's W. Andrew Collins says the research shows further that youngsters who do not understand violence, but who are exposed to it, are more likely to be aggressive than they are if they understand the scene's consequences.

Collins says he knows of no conclusive, scientific work that relates a specific show to an act of violence. But if any work "comes close to that" it would be that of psychologist Margaret Hanratty of Orlando, Fla., Collins said. According to Hanratty, the average youngster in the United States will see 18,000 TV murders before age 18. After interviewing Hanratty, Judge Baker refused to allow her to testify. □

Treaty works to save Antarctic resources

Representatives of the 13 member nations of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 spent three weeks behind closed doors in London discussing issues and strategies for conserving the Antarctic's near pristine environment. When they emerged last week, they carried with them unanimously-agreed-upon recommendations—ones that, if ratified by all member parties, will carry treaty enforcement.

The most significant recommendation was to form a commission to research, monitor and set regulations on marine fishing. Its primary function would be protection against wanton exploitation of the Antarctic's abundant krill. Krill are shrimp-like crustaceans with potential as a food source. Some estimates of krill populations indicate they are so abundant that they could be harvested in yields that equal or surpass the world's annual edible-fish catch, without depleting the stock, says Theodore Sellin, a State Department member and representative to the London meeting. Already West Germany, Poland, Japan and the Soviet Union are fishing Antarctic krill in experimental programs, Sellin says.

Also discussed, but in less detail, was how to protect the continent's mineral resources—particularly oil. Sellin says that "at present we have literally no idea whether or not there is oil under the Antarctic," but if there is, there must be an agreement in force to protect the environment and see that the wealth is distributed fairly. How to do this will be discussed in greater detail at the treaty's next consultative meeting, in 1979. □

Court allows industry microorganism patent

Companies can patent and own certain forms of life that they develop, according to a new ruling by the U. S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals. The decision allows the Upjohn Company, a drug manufacturer in Kalamazoo, Mich., to patent *Streptomyces vellosus*, the microorganism the company uses to produce the antibiotic lincomycin. This ruling may open the way for other manufacturers to patent microorganisms that they develop with both traditional genetic techniques and the newer recombinant DNA methods. The court said that microorganisms have become important industrial tools and that it saw no reason to deprive its owner or creator of the protection and advantages of the patent system. The decision may have major effects on the food, beverage, pharmaceutical and agricultural industries. Industry scientists have complained that inadequate patent and ownership protection has discouraged major industry investments in genetic research. □