thermore, in the past 50 years other causes of death such as the infectious diseases have lost much of their importance, thus increasing the proportion of deaths caused by cancer.

Michigan Reactor Controversy

The Atomic Energy Commission has granted a conditional construction permit to the Power Reactor Development Company of Detroit for the building of a nuclear power plant near Monroe, Mich., with a capacity of 100,000 kilowatts of electric power. The plant, which will be known as the Enrico Fermi Atomic Power Plant, will have a reactor of the fast-neutron breeder type.

The Power Reactor Development Company is composed of 26 industrial concerns, more than half of which are utility companies. The power generated by the nuclear plant will be distributed by the Detroit Edison Company, one of the member industries.

The permit covers only construction of the nuclear plant and does not extend to its operation. However, issuance of the permit has evoked strong protests. The AEC's advisory committee says that not enough is known about fast nuclear power plants to rule out the possibility of a dangerous failure. On the strength of this opinion, Thomas Murray, a member of the commission, and Sen. Clinton P. Anderson and Rep. Chet Holifield of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, have objected to the commission's conditional approval of the new reactor. In a statement to the press Holifield said:

"A small experimental operation of a fast-breeder type reactor "melted down' in Arco, Idaho, last November. There was no serious reaction because the operation was only a tiny laboratory experimental type, but it was an 'accidental' melt-down from causes not foreseen. As far as we know the same thing could happen to the 100,000-kilowatt plant the AEC has approved for Michigan."

Belgian Reactor Ban

Public fears in Belgium have led to the banning of the reactor that was to have been exhibited at the International Exposition to be held in Brussels in 1958. However, a pilot model with a capacity of about 11,000 kilowatts may be built within easy distance of the city. Some of Belgium's leading industrialists in the power production field have been in the United States discussing this and related matters with the Atomic Energy Commission and private industry.

According to a report in the *New York Times,* the Belgians are no more concerned than others about radiation danger. However, on the basis of available information the citizenry feel that the operation of even a pilot model within the city limits seems to be a "needless, even a foolhardy risk." Belgium is by no means behind in matters of nuclear energy. Because she possesses one of the world's largest sources of uranium, Belgium has received special treatment with regard to the exchange of information and materials and therefore has a well-advanced atomic energy program.

South African Observatory

Six European nations are considering building a joint observatory in South Africa that will be second in size only to Mount Palomar in the United States. The South African observatory would have a 120-inch telescope compared with Mount Palomar's 200-inch unit. The nations involved are Britain, France, West Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

Pieter T. Oosterhoff of Leiden Observatory, who is leading a joint European southern observatory expedition on a survey of possible sites in South Africa, says that all of these countries, except the United Kingdom, have approved the project in principle. Individual financial contributions are yet to be agreed upon, and the U.K. is expected to make known its decision at the next meeting of the group to be held at Stockholm in October.

U.K. University Population

Wallis Taylor has estimated the size of the university-age population (18, 19, and 20 years) to be expected in the United Kingdom for each year up to 1972 [*Nature* **178**, 135 (21 July 1956)]. The estimates are based on forecasts for the survival of children already born, with allowances for the decreasing mortality this population has shown.

The population in this age group was 1.64 million in 1955. According to the estimates, the population will increase by 42 percent to reach a maximum of 2.34 million in 1966, and will decline steadily to 1.95 million in 1972. Taylor's figures indicate that the peak number of students who will be seeking university education will be larger than had hitherto been expected.

University Research in the Soviet Union

The role of universities in research in the Soviet Union is undergoing a major change, according to the *New York* Times. The Soviet Government has ordered the transfer of a number of research institutions from the control of the Soviet Academy of Sciences to that of the universities. The Ministry of Higher Education, which controls the universities, will compile a plan that will stipulate the most important areas for research. It is expected that universities will work on automation of production, development of semiconductors, the application of oxygen to metallurgy, the chemistry of radioactive substances, nuclear physics, machine tool design, the increase of crop yields, and so on.

Officials of the Soviet Academy of Sciences will be put under increased pressure to produce research results by a competitive device. One-fifth of the senior scientific posts will be put up annually for open competition. Formerly, such posts were lifetime assignments.

Genetics Congress Resolution

At the final session of the International Congress of Human Genetics which met recently in Copenhagen, Denmark, Herman J. Muller of the University of Indiana proposed the following resolution on radiation danger. It was passed unanimously by the approximately 400 participants.

"The damage produced by radiation on the hereditary material [of man] is real and should be taken seriously into consideration in both the peaceful and military uses of nuclear energy as well as in all medical, commercial and industrial practices in which X-rays or other ionizing radiation is emitted.

"It is recommended that the investigation of the amount and type of damage and of related genetic questions be greatly extended and intensified with a view to safe-guarding the well-being of future generations."

National Bureau of Standards To Be Moved

A tract of approximately 550 acres of land near Gaithersburg, Md., has been selected for relocation of the Washington laboratories of the National Bureau of Standards. The move will permit the bureau to plan new buildings to replace present research facilities, which have become inadequate for current needs. The new site was selected as most suited to the special requirements of the bureau's scientific and engineering programs. The choice was based on a number of factors, including accessibility by railroad and highway as well as topography for certain technical projects.

Congress appropriated funds for site acquisition and preliminary planning early in June after details about the pro-