

argue that the unanimity underscores the validity of existing standards, for different bodies of the world's leading radiation experts have all looked at the relevant scientific literature and reached essentially the same conclusions as to allowable exposure levels. However, critics of the standards charge that the various groups are so similar in outlook and have such overlapping memberships that they are merely different parts of the "nuclear energy lobby" wearing different hats and rubber-stamping each other's decisions. Perhaps the leading hat wearer of them all is Lauriston Taylor, who was key radiation protection official at the National Bureau of Standards for several decades, has been head of the NCRP ever since it was established, served on the ICRP from its formation until 1969 (he's still a member emeritus), was heavily involved in the FRC until the mid-1960's, and served on a radiation committee of the Public Health Service.

Taylor readily acknowledges that there is considerable swapping of experts and expertise among the various groups, but he believes this has simply enabled each group to avail itself of the latest knowledge without in any sense turning the groups into mere "rubber stamps" of each other. As an example, he cites a situation which developed in 1956-57 at the time of the last major revision in recommended standards. He recalls that a National Academy of Sciences committee recommended a tightening of standards based on genetic considerations, a British Medical Research Council group came to essentially the same conclusion, and the ICRP and the NCRP, which were both aware of these developments, made similar recommendations. "A lot of things happened simultaneously because there was so much cross membership, so it's pretty hard to say who did what first," Taylor says. "But I regard all four actions as independent. No one or two or three persons could swing a position on any of these groups."

Figuring out which, if any, of these organizations is the most important force in developing standards is difficult, but several experts believe it is probably the NCRP. Paul C. Tompkins, former executive director of the FRC and now acting head of the division of criteria and standards in EPA's radiation program, told *Science* that "NCRP is the most important organization without doubt." Similarly, Lauriston Taylor told *Science* that, although

Academy Panel Kicks over Traces

The Port of New York Authority (PONYA) has announced that it will not build additional runways for John F. Kennedy Airport into Jamaica Bay. In making the decision, PONYA followed the recommendation of a report it commissioned from the National Academy of Sciences-National Academy of Engineering. The report concluded that the runway expansion under consideration would cause major irreversible ecological damage to the bay.

The study group displayed initiative rarely found in Academy committees, which usually apply themselves to the formulation of answers to specific technical questions. The team, made up of 27 scholars and environmentalists, was initially expected to deal only with the consequences of new runways in the bay. However, encouraged by letters from the departments of Transportation and the Interior, they took the bit in their teeth and came up with a comprehensive document that not only deals with the future of the entire bay, but also aspires to be a national guide for airport planning and economy.

During the course of the investigation, the study group fell into some warm disputes with the Academy's Environmental Studies Board, which was worried that the committee was exceeding its mandate. The Board also took issue with some of the report's more ambitious recommendations and reacted uneasily to the subjectivity of many of the opinions expressed in it. But the committee held firm, and its recommendations have been presented unaltered.

The report summarizes in 11 recommendations a policy that would strengthen the federal hand in airport planning and site designation, cut down on aircraft noise, regulate traffic flow, and develop Jamaica Bay for conservation and recreation.

The bay, surrounded by Brooklyn, Queens, the airport, and the Rockaways peninsula, harbors a wildlife sanctuary and several thousand squatters in its marshy center. As urban bays go, it is described as "moderately polluted." The National Park Service wants to make the entire bay part of a Gateway National Recreation Area, but the study group, to the surprise of many environmentalists, turned thumbs down on this idea. Instead, it advocated the more difficult and expensive course of developing city park and recreational areas around the inner bay in a 10-year program that would include the extension of mass transit connections and a stepping-up of the sewage treatment program.

The committee's airport recommendations cover everything from site selection to landing fees. They suggest that the Secretary of Transportation be allowed to acquire land and to use all powers necessary for the construction of needed airports in cases where local agencies are unwilling or unable to carry out his recommendations. The committee urges more research on vertical and short takeoff and landing systems and on ground access systems. For traffic control, it proposes consolidating flight schedules to promote more efficient use of fewer airplanes. (One member notes that dozens of half-filled planes wing their way daily to Chicago, when two 747 flights could carry the same passengers.) Another recommendation, bound to elicit loud protests, is that a landing fee of \$100 be imposed on private planes during peak hours.

Strong measures are put forth to conquer the noise problem which, at Kennedy, is monstrous. In addition to causing widespread insomnia and irritation, jet noise robs many thousands of schoolchildren of an hour of teaching time a day. The report asks for new construction standards that include soundproofing and for the installation of acoustically treated engine pods on all aircraft by 1975.

The report, at the very least, has caused PONYA to drop any idea of building more runways into the bay; at best, it is a far-reaching environmental policy statement which will make a significant contribution to future airport planning.—CONSTANCE HOLDEN