

of Middlebury College. Some of the state's better farmland is in the portion of the county which lies in the Champlain Valley. But the county is also fringed on the east by the Green Mountains, and the surveyors then found what they thought was an ideal site for a pumped storage hydro plant within Addison's boundaries.

Velco announced that further studies were being made at three of the Addison County sites and by midsummer the assumption was growing that the choice for the new 400-Mw plant site was to be West Salisbury, a few miles south of Middlebury. The company in-

sisted that no decision had been made, but a revised plan for a smaller but deeper cooling pond had been issued, and this led observers to conclude that the West Salisbury site had been singled out.

The preliminaries had stimulated opposition in Addison County, most of it coming initially from local groups—like the Society for the Preservation of Rural Ferrisburg—formed to defend individual sites. Although the focus was on potential sites for a 400-Mw oil-burning plant, perhaps the strongest local reaction came from a group formed to block building of a pumped

storage plant. "Pumped storage" refers to the use of off-peak power from other generating plants to pump water to a reservoir at a high elevation. During periods of heavy demand for power, this water is released through drop shafts and pressure tunnels to operate turbines in a plant at a lower elevation. The water is then collected in a second reservoir, and the cycle is repeated. The principal advantage of the "pumper" is that it requires none of the fuel-transport or storage facilities of fossil-fueled plants and causes few of the air—or water—pollution problems of fossil or nuclear plants.

The two most obvious disadvantages are the need to take a relatively large area for the two reservoirs and the restrictions on other uses of these reservoirs because of the constant rise and fall in water levels.

Opposition to the idea of a pumped storage station came almost immediately from the Abbey Pond Watershed Protective Association, formed mainly of residents of the area that would be affected by the site. One of the most interesting features of a report on the pumped storage station by the organization is that it puts roughly equal emphasis on environmental and economic effects on the area. The report points out that the project would adversely affect portions of a national forest and productive farmland and produce "sterile" lakes and encroach on an ecologically valuable bog area.

In discussing potential economic effects, the report argues that tax benefits and boosts to the local economy from new power plants are generally overestimated, while the costs to the area of increased public services are generally underestimated. During the period of construction, for example, the influx of several hundred construction workers and their families into a small community creates heavy pressure on schools and other public services and results in a boom that may be followed by a bust when the plant is completed. The report also argues that, when a new power plant is completed, ample electricity is made available at lower rates and industry is attracted. This can result in "artificially induced growth" which will change the area in ways people will regret.

The socioeconomic effects of new power plants are also being assessed by a group looking at the implications of Velco's plans on the county as a whole. This is the Addison County Regional Planning and Development Commis-

Briefing

Four Nobelists Zap Senator

A recent exchange in the letters columns of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* has won for Senator Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) the distinction of a public contradiction from four Nobel laureates. In the course of the Senate debate this July on the proposal to set up an independent cancer agency outside the National Institutes of Health, Javits announced that he and a majority of his colleagues on the Senate health subcommittee "feel that we are so close to breakthroughs in cancer . . . that we must . . . undertake a crash program . . . to make the final breakthroughs. . . . That is the question we think we are close enough to breakthroughs on, and that one final drive will do it."

Reproved in the editorial columns of the *Times* and the *Post* for what was politely referred to as optimism, Javits replied that his prediction of a scientific breakthrough was merely a paraphrase of statements by others. The paraphrase was not notably precise: of the two statements cited by Javits, one by Sidney Farber of the Boston Children's Cancer Research Foundation and the other by the Senate Panel of Consultants on the Conquest of Cancer, neither mentioned anything about a breakthrough, let alone of the imminent variety, and Farber's statement spoke explicitly of the "eventual control of cancer."

Javits's defense nevertheless pro-

voked a round-robin letter from a group of distinguished signatories—including the four Nobel laureates Julius Axelrod, Arthur Kornberg, Marshall Nirenberg, and Severo Ochoa—who rebuked the Senator for predicting a breakthrough in research and for implying that scientists supported the proposal for an independent cancer agency. "The scientific community is overwhelmingly opposed to this legislation," the group declared in a letter to the *Post* last week.

"We in the Senate," Javits said at one point in his defense, "are not scientists, but this does not mean that, granted expert guidance, we cannot concern ourselves with scientific matters." A trivial but maybe not insignificant pointer to the level of guidance granted the Senate was a description of the work on reverse transcriptases. As related by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) during the debate on the cancer agency legislation in July, the two discoverers of the enzyme, Howard Temin and David Baltimore, became transmogrified to Professor Demon and Dr. Bolter, whose work, the Senate was informed, "has completely shaken the dogma of DNA" (*Congressional Record*, 7 July 1971, p. S10612). With Demon and Bolter racing away at the problem, the distinguished senators doubtless wondered, how could a breakthrough not be imminent? By a 79-1 vote, the Senate affirmed its belief in the Demon-Bolter theory of curing cancer, and it will take more than a clutch of Nobel laureates to shake the faith of Senator Javits and his colleagues in the theory they have fathered.—N.W.