

that the hearing was recessed until mid-October. At the same time, Vermont power companies have been carrying on a systematic search for plant sites for the next decade, particularly for a location for a 400-megawatt (Mw) fossil-fueled plant scheduled to be built by 1976. Activist opposition is already mustering to defend several of the potential sites.

In large part, because of the delay in getting the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant into operation, Vermont will go into the winter with no reserve generating capacity and power shortages an even bet. Vermont has imported about 80 percent of its power in recent years, and its dependent status gives the state a big stake in the regional solution of power problems based on an integrated system.

In New England, as elsewhere, environmental issues get fairly wide attention in the press; developments in regional planning, by and large, get much less notice. A few weeks ago the final touches were added to power pooling arrangements for the six New England states and the document went out to the companies in the region. Establishment of a New England Power Pool (NEPOOL) has been under discussion for about 5 years. NEPOOL is generally regarded as a good start on a regional power system, but falls far short of hopes originally held out for it. Many of the reasons that NEPOOL is a "lowest-common-denominator" pact are indigenous to New England.

The six New England states form a compact area, with the land boundaries of New York State on the west and south and Canada to the north. The power industry follows New England traditions of self-reliance and small-scale enterprise. The area is served by 144 power companies, 60 of them investor owned, 77 municipal, and 7 co-operative. The municipals tend to serve small cities, and big private companies are the dominant force. Some 73 percent of the generating capacity in the region is owned by 19 companies. Power in New England has never been abundant or cheap. New Englanders, according to 1968 figures, paid 30 percent more for power and used 24 percent less than people in other regions did.

Part of the explanation is that New England is a long way from the sources of fossil fuels. But the patchwork of small service areas and small generating units has limited efficiency and raised costs. At a time when big

OEO Hedges on Kentucky Program

The Office of Economic Opportunity's efforts to provide a program of comprehensive medical services for the poor people of Floyd County, Kentucky, are still generating an abundance of controversy (*Science*, 30 April), but no health care. What began as an experiment by OEO in trying to improve the health of the poor in the Appalachian county simply by transporting patients to existing private medical facilities has evolved into an ongoing lesson in the power of local politicians over the delivery of rural health care and, if necessary, over Washington bureaucrats.

After 4 years and \$5 million, the Floyd County Comprehensive Health Care Program (*Science*, 30 April) had failed to provide anything approaching comprehensive health care. It did, however, supply the local power structure, headed by County Judge Henry Stumbo, with a number of jobs for patronage and the local doctors with a good deal of profits for providing care that, in some instances, was found by OEO medical audit teams to be "extremely poor."

Following a continuous barrage of criticism, most of it from the Eastern Kentucky Welfare Rights Organization (EKWRO), a group of 450 poor families in the county, OEO moved to improve the program. After several warnings brought no results, OEO formally charged the program's board of directors last spring with a series of violations of OEO regulations, including failure to provide services, intimidation of staff members and consumer representatives on the board, and conflicts of interest. In June, OEO held a hearing on the charges—it included a good deal of bickering and a statement by a county dentist and board member that "Sure there's been some people taking graft, but you should remember that one bad apple don't spoil the whole bunch." Following that hearing, OEO suspended its grant to the board of directors and began proceedings to terminate it altogether.

Meanwhile, EKWRO submitted a proposal to OEO to have the grant transferred to a new board of directors that would have included several professionals from outside the county, including the director of OEO's Park Duvalle Health Center in Louisville, representatives of antipoverty groups, and a number of consumer representatives. Privately, OEO officials assured EKWRO that the chances for the grant to the new board were excellent.

Then suddenly the picture changed. In August, an OEO lawyer went to Floyd County to make arrangements for the hearing on the final termination of the grant. But a few days before the hearing was to have been held, OEO announced that the old board had voluntarily relinquished the grant and that a new planning grant would be awarded to a new board, which would consist of Judge Stumbo, four representatives from outside the county, two consumer representatives to be chosen by the old board, and three consumers elected at large.

Members of EKWRO call the new arrangement "a total sellout by OEO." They claim that the judge will continue to exert power over the program, particularly since he will have a hand in selecting two of the consumer members, and, they claim, his political machine will be able to elect the other three.

Just what happened to OEO to cause it to change its course? According to sources in the county and at OEO, the judge simply told the OEO lawyer that, if he had no influence over a new program, then there would be no new program. Indeed, his powers as the county's chief judicial and administrative officer would make it possible for him to harass any program out of existence.

Officials at OEO claim to have gained a few chips in the bargaining process. The new health program, they say, must provide genuine comprehensive health care, including the employment of salaried clinic physicians, or it will be eliminated. Whether that is possible in an Eastern Kentucky coal mining county remains to be seen.

—ROBERT J. BAZELL