

ing legislation, which would break into an important area of land use, planning, was one of the top items on the environmental agenda President Nixon unveiled last February. The Administration submitted a bill that requires the establishment of state siting agencies and arranges for planning, site selection, and consideration of potential environmental and social conflicts up to 10 years in advance of construction. The bill is designed to give citizens and other agencies plenty of time to assess company plans, thus avoiding costly last-minute court fights. The subcommittee more or less ignored this bill and finally designed one that was a compromise between the Nixon measure and one put forth by its chairman, Torbert Macdonald (D-Mass.). No one seems to like the compromise bill. The power industry doesn't want any bill at all. Neither Nixon nor the environmentalists like it because

the federal role in planning and siting certification is hobbled if a state doesn't set up a siting agency to oversee the process. Citizens may bring suits, but if they are dismissed by the court the costs are assessed against the petitioner. In certain conditions of demonstrated need, facilities are exempted from energy and environmental protection laws.

Worst of all, in locally unresolvable situations, the bill puts the final decision into the hands of an ad hoc three-man panel rather than a permanent, accountable agency. Congressional staff members fault environmental groups for not having interested themselves sufficiently in the legislation. This compromise bill is probably bound for considerable revision. It has not yet been brought before the House, and the Senate, because of the controversial nature of the subject, is planning to have

its hearings held before the full Commerce Committee.

This bill is one case in which the Administration and the ecologists are on the same side. This is not so of the pesticides control bill that passed the House on 8 November. The Administration bill was watered down, with the help of heavy industry lobbying, in the Agriculture Committee. Of the three original categories of pesticides proposed—general use, restricted use, and use by permit only—the last was struck from the Administration bill. A provision was added to allow indemnity payments to a producer whose pesticide has been declared off limits, and the bill stipulates that scientific questions raised when a registration is lifted should be referred to the National Academy of Sciences—a provision that environmentalists say weakens the authority of EPA.

Briefing

Thumbs Down on Think Tanks

Bad vibrations for military think tanks have emanated from the House Appropriations Committee. Buried at the back of a 135-page report on Defense Department appropriations are statements that are tantamount to a sentence of execution or, as the report phrases it, "orderly phase-down." The committee's action probably marks the end of a 20-year era in which independent research centers such as the Rand Corporation proliferated and gained celebrity as purveyors of high-level strategic thought to the military.

The committee's kiss of death follows in the wake of a formidable breach of military security by a former Rand employee, Daniel Ellsberg. But the affair of the Pentagon papers seems to have been as much pretext as cause. Federal Contract Research Centers, as think tanks are more formally known, have long been in disfavor with Congress because they seemed to remove important issues of strategic analysis one step further away from Congressional control.

The four think tanks specifically mentioned in the committee report are the Air Force's Rand, the Army's Research Analysis Corporation (RAC), the Navy's Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) and the Defense Department's Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). For all four the committee proposes severe budget cuts of the order of 25 percent. Similar action has been taken by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Explaining its action on Rand's budget, the committee says it "feels strongly that the time has come for the military services to begin phasing out the 'think tank' operations which have been supported for more than two decades. The level of proficiency and pay in the government service is such that the government should be able to move these efforts in-house. The committee feels that the government officials responsible for national defense should be more closely involved in these efforts than they are under the present procedures. The committee further believes that in matters of security better control can be maintained within governmental organizations than outside the government. The reductions in this area approximate 24 percent and are based on giving the Department an opportunity for an orderly phase-down." Similar aspersions

accompany the committee's comments on RAC, CNA, and IDA.

The committee's action has come at a time when many think tanks are engaged in rethinking their roles in society, an exercise that further complicates the sufficiently delicate relationships with their military patrons. In Rand's case the diversification into urban affairs—Rand has a \$2 million contract with New York City—seems to have been one of the issues over which Rand and its president, Henry S. Rowen, decided this month to part company. Rowen is said to have favored domestic projects despite criticism from other members of Rand that civilian work would detract from Rand's effectiveness to the military.

In its desire to give both loyalty and independent advice to its masters, Rand may have succeeded in pleasing nobody. "The hawks think these places are full of Ellsbergs and the doves think they are full of sycophants and don't do anything useful anyway," says one observer. According to a staff aide on the House Appropriations committee, it is open to question just how independent the think tanks are, and whatever the virtues of independent advice there are also advantages in having the provision of advice linked with the responsibility for acting on it.—N.W.