

considering such a move anyway, to stage a debate on 28 January in Riverside Church, New York City. There, the proposed policy statement was attacked by three experts appointed by the Atomic Industrial Forum—namely Nobel laureate Hans Bethe, of Cornell, David J. Rose, professor of nuclear engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and R. Lynn Seeber, general manager of the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was defended by three members of the Mead-Dubos committee—namely Abrahamson, Alfvén, and John T. Edsall, professor of biochemistry emeritus at Harvard University. Three ethicists chosen by the division of church and society raised questions with both sides.

To the surprise of many supporters of the antiplutonium statement, the ethicists seemed to lean against the statement. Margaret Maxey, associate professor of bioethics at the University of Detroit, said it remains to be proved whether all the dire consequences predicted by the Mead-Dubos group will actually occur; she suggested that the demands placed upon humankind by peaceful nuclear technology might actually bring about a commitment to stable, global social arrangements—"a new level of cultural evolution." Preston Williams, professor of theology at Harvard, found much of the material in the Mead-Dubos report "unbelievable" and based on "fears" that are "passed off as facts." And Roger L. Shinn, professor of social ethics at Union Theological Seminary, criticized the Mead-Dubos group for ignoring the social justice issue—namely, what happens if a curb on nuclear energy throws people out of work or slows the development of Third World countries. In a subsequent letter, he added: "The NCC loses credibility when it lends ethical and religious authority to technically debatable positions . . . is the NCC asking me to hear its ethical pronouncement, or is it asking me to bet on its list of experts against another list of experts, on technical points that I am incapable of judging?"

The controversy caused sharp splits among the churches and the congregations. The United Presbyterian Church appointed a study group—seemingly weighted with nuclear advocates, including John W. Simpson, of Westinghouse, chairman of the Atomic Industrial Forum—that urged the National Council to forebear adopting any policy statement pending further "dialogue." And the Central United Protestant Church, of Richland, Washington, home of the mammoth Hanford atomic installation, called suppression of nuclear power "immor-

al" because "nuclear power is our nation's best hope to avoid the darker world of civil chaos, unemployment and hunger." Meanwhile, Ralph Nader, in a letter to members of the governing board, urged them not only to call for a moratorium on plutonium, but also to consider "the fact that our present atomic reactors are enormous risks, even without the use of plutonium fuel."

As the controversy mounted, the chairman of the NCC's unit committee for the division of church and society called together an ad hoc group of people from several denominations to revise the proposed policy statement. That group concluded that plutonium was too narrow an issue to consider in a policy statement, so it opted instead for a resolution—a lesser form of pronouncement in the NCC's armamentarium. The NCC's last previous policy statement on nuclear energy—issued in 1960 at a time of enthusiasm for the "peaceful atom"—had called nuclear energy "a gift from God" and had enthused that "Christians look with reverent gratitude upon the well-nigh inexhaustible treasures of nuclear energy for peaceful uses." It spoke in such broad terms about nuclear energy that a statement limited to plutonium did not seem an appropriate successor. The ad hoc group was unable to agree on a definition of the moratorium that was called for in its resolution, so it forwarded two options. Subsequently, the executive committee of the unit committee approved the toughest option—calling for a moratorium on commercial processing and use of plutonium and on building of a demonstration breeder reactor.

The drama reached its climax at the governing board's meeting in Atlanta in early March. The Atomic Industrial Forum met simultaneously in the same city—a coincidence which NCC staffers believe was deliberately arranged but which the Forum insists was pure happenstance based on hotel arrangements made long before the current controversy. At the NCC meeting, the participants were deluged with arguments from Abrahamson, Mead, Gregory Minor, one of the three General Electric engineers who recently resigned in protest against the hazards of nuclear power (he was flown in at NCC's expense), members of Project Survival, which is backing the antinuclear campaign in California, and representatives of the nuclear industry who came over from their own meeting to monitor the proceedings.

When the showdown votes were taken, the resolution was overwhelmingly approved. In some ways, it represented

a softening of the position taken by the Mead-Dubos group. Thus the resolution recognized that the consequences of a plutonium economy are "more ambiguous" than it seemed when the original policy statement was drafted. The resolution also referred the original policy statement back to the division of church and society for further study. That study is to examine the theological, economic, sociopolitical and technical implications of all energy use, including nuclear. And it is to involve people with experience in nuclear and related disciplines as well as consumers, industrialists, labor representatives, theologians, ethicists, environmentalists, and Third World groups. The exercise is to result in a report and proposed policy statement for action by the governing board within 2 years.

That elaborate procedure seemed a mild slap at the way the original policy statement was prepared. Indeed, many participants in the struggle faulted the Mead-Dubos report as challengeable on technical grounds and skimpy on examining the moral questions. But it had started the churches on a serious investigation of such ethical questions as the impact various energy systems will have on life-styles, natural resources, human health, civil liberties, the welfare of future generations, and the gap between rich and poor nations and between rich and poor individuals within nations. Such issues tend to get ignored when technocrats dominate the debate, so it may take the churches to tell us whether plutonium is a gift from God or a temptation sent by the devil.—PHILIP M. BOFFEY

APPOINTMENTS

John T. Wilson, acting president, University of Chicago, to president of the university. . . . **Jacquelyn Mattfeld**, dean of faculty and academic affairs, Brown University, to president, Barnard College. . . . **Anthony J. Diekema**, associate chancellor, University of Illinois Medical Center, to president, Calvin College. . . . **Eldon Sutton**, associate dean of graduate studies, University of Texas, Austin, to vice president for research at the university. . . . **Edward L. Henry**, vice president for institutional development, St. John's University, to president, St. Michael's College. . . . **Edward I. Stevens**, dean of academic affairs, Northland College, to president, Lyndon State College. . . . **Helmut P. Hofmann**, vice president, Westminster College, to president at the college.