

plans of nuclear power production should, therefore, be based on the utilisation of raw materials available in our country. The selection of the reactor is also an important factor. For Tarapur we have selected the boiling water type of reactor, which is in use in the U S A, Germany and Italy. The selection of the reactor will mainly be determined by the fuel and moderator used in the process and the capital investment we are prepared for, Britain, whose atomic power production programme is quite advanced, uses gas-cooled graphite moderated reactors, which use natural thorium and uranium as fuel instead of enriched uranium. However, the initial cost of establishing such a power plant is very high.

The whole atomic power programme should be viewed as a long-term plan rather than on a short-term basis, because plutonium is a by-product from the reactors which can be used again in other reactors for production of more power.

Fruitless Conference

THE conference on transport and power held under the auspices of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry proved to be singularly fruitless in its deliberations, writes a participant in the conference. A large number of platitudes were voiced, and the conference rapidly became a forum for airing grievances of individual groups rather than for constructive discussion of the transport and power crisis.

The conference opened with the speech of the President of the Federation. Shri Shriyans Prasad Jain, who described the transport and power difficulties to which the Minister for Planning replied that it was true that there was shortage of transport and power, but the Government was doing its best, and had, in fact, done pretty well in the last 10 years. After this rather tepid exchange, the conference was divided into three sub-committees, one to deal with railways, and another to deal with roads, inland waterways and coastal shipping and the third to deal with power. On the third day, the three sub-committees made their recommendations which were

uniform only in their vagueness. Railways were asked to take special steps to increase operational efficiency and to replace steam haulage by dieselisation wherever they could; it was also suggested that more of everything should be set up. Coal firing furnaces should be converted into oil burning furnaces, more washeries should be built, thermal power stations should be in colliery areas and more cargo should be carried by coastal shipping. Nothing new was suggested; nor was any attempt made to understand the problems that were facing the country. It was obvious from the general tone of the recommendations that, as far as the conference was concerned, it might as well not have discussed anything and yet come to the same conclusions. No one denies that there is insufficiency of transport; the problem is how to increase it with our *limited resources*. For example, from the way the sub-committee on railways argued, one would have thought that this was not an undeveloped country at all,

Light on Road Transport

OF the other two sub-committees, the sub-committee on roads was the most vociferous and, in some ways, the most specific in its recommendations: there were many road operators every one of whom held different views; and their recommendations, which numbered over 30, were not only detailed but also seemed to reflect genuine grievances. They divided their recommendations into two parts: first, the immediate plan in which they argued for the need for greater freedom and the removal of restrictions on road transport. Some sensible criticisms were also made like the one about the harassment on account of octroi collection, invoice verification at sales-tax checkpoints and weigh-bridges etc.

They also recommended the use of truck-trailers, organisation of trucks operators into viable units, consolidation of all taxes, and fixing of minimum uniform laden weight that should be permitted on all national highways. For the long-term, they made general recommendations like development of roads and widening of the national highways, etc. It was, in fact, the only subcommittee that worked

like a seminar and came out with some worthwhile arguments. Coastal shipping and inland water transport formed the subject of a subcommittee within a sub-committee. Coastal shipowners pointed out that one of the reasons for the slow development in the last ten years is the inadequacy of cargoes on the coast. Coastal cargo had increased only by 2.3 per cent between 1951 and 1961. The main reason for this was that in spite of transport by coastal shipping being cheaper for commodities carried over long distances in bulk, the railways have carried more of these commodities because of the artificial freight structure that they have developed.

The power sub-committee finished its deliberations in half a day. It complained about import and export procedures and insufficient power for industries. The demand for a fairer return on capital for the electricity industry was repeated. The committee asked for an increase in the standard rate by at least one per cent so that the electricity supply industry could play a more positive role in the development of power.

The trouble with conferences of this kind is that they degenerate into a sort of tea party of diverse individuals and groups. Here only the private sector was represented. As the Conference was held in Delhi, it should have been surely possible to persuade a few Government officials to attend and take part in the deliberations of the sub-committees. Instead, a whole host of Secretaries accompanied their Ministers to the opening day, and then left the conference high and dry. The result was the half-baked and platitudinous recommendations, with the exception of those of the sub-committee on road transport. The sole official present was a Deputy Secretary in the Ministry for Transport who not only attended the sub-committee's meetings but also took a lively interest in the discussions. While he argued the Government's point of view he also tried to understand the private industrialists' complaints. The result was the worthwhile discussion at the meetings of the road transport sub-committee. For the rest, the recommendations were made only to be ignored,