

terminal equipment for time-sharing systems as areas which are wide open. Although "the example of the United States also shows that a clearly delineated policy is not a prerequisite to successful support on the part of the government", the report says that governments can help to produce the conditions for a flourishing industry. For example, governments can help by encouraging education in the computer sciences, by supporting new and fast growing areas of the industry, and by improving the communications network (chiefly the telephone system) so that the development of time-sharing computers will not be hampered by expensive and unreliable communications.

POLLUTION

Sewage Works are Inadequate

ENVIRONMENTAL pollution is fast becoming the talking point of the British Establishment. Only five days before the Duke of Edinburgh spoke at the European Conservation Conference in Strasbourg, the House of Lords debated the pollution of British rivers. Lord Kennet, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, gave a comprehensive survey of the inadequacies of sewage treatment in Britain and outlined government thinking on new measures of control, although, in the absence of a comprehensive survey of the situation, few concrete proposals emerged.

Three out of every five local authority sewage works are producing effluent which is below standard and this, said Lord Kennet, is only part of the story. We do not know how much effluent is being poured directly into British rivers by industry, nor just how dirty our rivers are. Before the government can impose new regulations for sewage disposal, he said, a complete survey of British rivers must be carried out, and this is at present being undertaken by all the river authorities. Preliminary results of the survey, which should be available in June, will give some indication of changes in the condition of the rivers since 1958, but until then, "action taken before ignorance is dispelled will be capricious action".

Some hints of the government's intentions on new regulations were, however, given by Lord Kennet. Penalties for discharging insufficiently treated sewage need to be brought to a more realistic level, he said, because many firms find it cheaper to risk being fined than to spend the substantial sums needed to meet the standards demanded by the river authorities. The government is also looking into the suggestion that pollution of rivers should be an absolute offence, whether caused knowingly or not.

Lord Molson, who opened the debate, accused the government of soft pedalling on river pollution. In 1966, borough treasurers stated that 60 per cent of the effluent being poured into rivers failed to comply with standards laid down by river authorities, but these standards are difficult to enforce. First, sewage authorities may appeal to the Minister of Housing and Local Government that standards are unreasonable, and Lord Molson accused the government of showing a bias towards the sewage authorities. A circular sent by the Minister of Housing to the river authorities in 1968 pointed out that standards laid down for industrial effluents must be justified, whether they are unusually stringent or not. Second, river authorities

have no right of inspection of sewage works and, third, Lord Molson said that the fines for river pollution are "hopelessly inadequate".

Lord Molson said that the cost of sewage treatment, which is running at about £100 million a year, should be increased to about £300 million, and he indicated that this could be done by transferring money from housing, roads and so on. Such a step would go far towards meeting water requirements for the end of the century and would be more desirable than submerging additional areas of the Peak District to provide pure water.

One reason why sewage works are outdated, and river pollution is not being tackled fast enough, was suggested by Lord Nugent, chairman of the Thames Conservancy. There are no votes in sewage, he said, and local authorities are reluctant to spend ratepayers' money on sewage works when there are more attractive projects to be undertaken.

COUNTRYSIDE

Cars Curbed in Peak District

by our Planning Correspondent

FOR the first time in Britain, there is to be an attempt this summer to control weekend traffic in a beauty spot in a national park. Along a four mile stretch of road in the Goyt Valley in the Peak District National Park, motorists, other than those with permits, will be banned from using their cars at summer weekends and on public holidays from July to September this year and from Whitsuntide to September in 1971. There will, instead, be four new car parks at strategic points for up to 300 cars, marshalling arrangements and a mini-bus service to take people to picnic sites and nature trails. Walkers, cyclists, pony trekkers and people who need access to the land in the area will be allowed through the traffic free zone.

The experiment, which will last for two years and which has yet to be finally approved, is being organized by the Countryside Commission in cooperation with the Peak Park Planning Board using new powers now possible under the Road Traffic Regulation Act of 1967 and the Countryside Act of 1968. The scheme will cost the commission about £17,500 over the two years, but it is hoped that the motorist, by accepting some restrictions on the free use of his car in the Goyt Valley, will be able to enjoy the tranquillity of the countryside which he is at present destroying. The experiment, although on a small scale, is important because it could be the forerunner of similar schemes in parts of other national parks in Britain which are under heavy pressure from motor cars at certain times of the year. Parts of the Lake District National Park, for example, badly need some sort of traffic management in the summer months. But, according to the Friends of the Lake District, it is not just the weekend traffic that is threatening the beauty of the Lake District and the enjoyment of the majority of its visitors. In their latest newsletter the Friends describe the threats of new road works, increasing numbers of caravans, powerboats on the lakes, abandoned motor cars, and the removal of water-worn rock from attractive limestone areas in and around the Lake District. The Friends are particularly opposed to the route and scale of the proposed new road to by-pass