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Anglo-European Talks on use of High Flux Reactor

The following Press Notice has been issued by the Department of Education and Science:

The Government has authorised the Science Research Council (SRC) to enter into substantive negotiations with the French and German partners in the Institut Laue-Langevin (ILL) at Grenoble with a view to taking up a one-third share in their recently commissioned high flux reactor if suitable terms can be arranged.

Neutron studies are playing an increasingly important part in the study of solid and liquid states of matter and the use of these techniques is spreading rapidly in chemistry and biology as well as in physics and metallurgy. Present facilities in this country have been limited to the medium fluxes available from the reactors of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA). The Council for Scientific Policy (CSP) has endorsed the SRC's view that access to high flux facilities is now essential to progress using this research technique.

The Government has been considering for some time the need to provide high flux neutron beam facilities for British scientists. Preliminary discussions between the SRC and the French and German authorities has shown that there were two possible alternatives: firstly to build a high flux beam reactor in this country: secondly for the SRC to become full members of the ILL Consortium. The first alternative would have provided a reactor comparable to the Grenoble machine for the sole use of British scientists, and would also have provided irradiation facilities for the UKAEA in furtherance of their technological programmes. But it would have taken seven years to bring into commission and access to high flux facilities would have been severely limited in the meantime. If satisfactory terms can be agreed with the ILL authorities, British scientists will have immediate access to one-third of the facilities of the Grenoble reactor at a reduced overall cost. Successful conclusion of these negotiations will open the way to further European collaboration in scientific research.

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