various higher education, scientific and technological societies said they were taking an "unprecedented step" in presenting to Congress a unified position on the needs of science. They expressed concern at "the lack of a congressional policy in science which would embrace the principles of stable, balanced and controlled investment in basic research".

At a press conference in Washington to coincide with the publication of the joint statement, Dr Derek Bok, president of Harvard University, said that there was no contradiction between President Carter's aims to achieve a balanced budget, and to increase the federal investment in basic research.

"These positions are inextricably related, for out of basic research, if history is any judge, will evolve industrial innovation and growth, more efficient and thus less costly uses of labour, energy and equipment, and better health and security for all," Dr Bok said.

Dr David Saxon, president of the University of California, pointed to the present energy crisis as a "very real example" of what could happen if investment in basic research was allowed to fall behind. "Congress used

foresight in 1954 when it amended that Atomic Energy Act to provide for research and development of alternative energy sources. However a review of the funding record for programmes of basic research reveals a history of peaks and valleys. This lack of sustained commitment has discouraged outstanding talent and blunted national progress."

The need to maintain stability in funding is, in particular, being used to justify demands for further increases in funding for the National Institutes of Health. In announcing that it was requesting a level of funding virtually the same as the current year (the Office of Management and Budget is even said to have suggested a decrease) the administration pointed out that Congress voted last year for a 23% increase in biomedical research support—and that even if this was spread over two years, it would still be comparable to planned increases in other areas over the same period.

Supporters of more funds for biomedical research, however, argue that things are not that simple, and that a stationary NIH budget would introduce instabilities by drastically cutting back on new research starts. "Analysis of

the budget by mechanism reveals a disconcerting and unacceptable reduction in the funds available for young investigators," says Dr Suzanne Oparil of the University of Alabama, chairwoman of the American Federation for Clinical Research.

A marked increase in obligated non-competing research projects supported by NIH would, she says, result in a 43% decrease in funds available for competing research projects. "Because young biomedical investigators are supported primarily by investigator-initiated competing research grants, this reduction in funds for competing grants must be vigorously opposed."

Biomedical research workers are particularly concerned that although in previous years Congressional committees have traditionally provided significant increases to medical research, the current mood against further public spending—together with the loss of several key Congressmen, such as Senator Edward Brooke and Representative Paul Rogers, who had previously championed the medical research cause—mean that a comparable increase this year is far from guaranteed.

David Dickson

US accused of banning foreign scientists

FOREIGN scientists invited to lecture or participate in scientific meetings in the US continue on occasion to suffer the embarrassment of being denied entry to a country "proud of its right to freedom of speech", according to a senior member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

This situation arises because those taking part in scholarly and cultural exchanges whose political beliefs fall into particular categories—and in particular past or present members of the Communist party—must obtain a special waiver from the State Department to obtain a temporary entry visa.

"In general this policy has been implemented in a liberal way so as to remove automatic exclusion of foreign scientists and others who might express beliefs or support for political doctrines previously restricted by our immigration laws," Professor John Edsall, chairman of the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, told a Congressional committee studying US compliance with the Helsinki Agreement earlier this month.

"However in some cases the policy has remained unchanged, or foreign visitors have been excluded on grounds other than political beliefs, thus making the waiver procedure more difficult to implement. What is most desirable from the view of scientists is the removal of these restrictions from

the US immigration laws."

Professor Edsall, who is professor emeritus of biochemistry at Harvard University, listed a number of cases which, he said, appeared to violate the principles of free travel as stated at Helsinki, instances in which political or administrative decisions had impeded the free circulation of scientists. These included:

- The refusal of a visa application—later granted—to Dr Sylvia Berman, an Argentine psychologist now living in exile in Mexico city who is alleged to have previously expressed Marxist beliefs, to participate in a meeting of the American Public Health Association in Washington DC, last year.

- The denial of a visa in 1975 to Dr Joseph Needham, the British science historian. Although the state Department informally acknowledged that this was because of his allegedly Marxist beliefs, it refused to provide him with the reason for the denial. Dr Needham subsequently refused to apply for a waiver. On subsequent visits, Dr Needham has been granted a visa without having to apply for a waiver.

- Late last year, delays in reviewing the visa application of Professor Jean Pierre Vigier, a French physicist who had been invited to address the AAAS annual meeting in Houston, Texas, made it impossible for him to attend the conference.

- Dr Andre Frank, professor in the

school of development studies at the University of East Anglia, although previously a US resident, has consistently been denied a visa on various grounds, both regarding his political affiliations and unspecified evidence—which Dr Frank denies—that he may wish to take up residence in the US again.

Professor Edsall said that other areas of concern involved the controls placed on the travels of foreign scientists while visiting the US, since the State Department has divided the country into open and closed areas as part of our diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and East European countries.

"It appears questionable at the present time whether such a travel restriction policy will also be applied to the Chinese scientists, who are currently seeking expanded scientific exchange with the US. In the interests of science it is important to promote free access to all individuals who wish to exchange information, without arbitrarily assigning the need for screening or political controls", he said.

"Our violations are, I would agree, a good deal less serious than those that have occurred and still occur, in countries with Communist governments; but let us do away with them and show that we truly honour the spirit of the Helsinki accords."

David Dickson