(1971–72 prices) that is to be transferred by 1975–76 represents, on the face of things, 27% of the council's 1971–72 budget of £16.4 million. But, the council goes on, by the time a further £1.1 million has been transferred to the new Nature Conservancy Council and the £2.7 million spent on research training, the £1.5 million spent on the British Antarctic Survey and the £0.3 million spent on the Geological Museum are deducted as these all lie outside the responsibilities of the three customer departments, the budget from which the £4.8 million has to be transferred is only £10.7 million. In other words the £4.8 million which is to be transferred represents 45% of the budgets of NERC institutes.

One solution to the difficulty that the council is facing in transferring programmes to ministries—although not a solution that is proposed in the annual report—might be to alter the balance of transfers between departments. At present the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will only spend £0.5 million with the council by 1976, yet much of the marine and fisheries work undertaken by the council could easily and logically be funded by MAFF. Equally, marine sounding work could be financed by the Ministry of Defence (on a non-secret basis), thus reducing the amounts that will have to be transferred to the budgets of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment.

Apart from outlining its problems stemming from the white paper, the annual report also exhaustively explains the large scale reorganizations that have taken place within the council. The reshuffling of the physical marine science institutes into the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences is expounded and the thinking that lies behind the proposed Institute of Terrestrial Ecology is set down.

The council records its doubts about the move of the administrative offices to Swindon, which will possibly be completed by 1977, leaving only conference facilities and office services for senior employees in London. It is the view of the NERC Staff that dispersal will "seriously weaken the coherence of NERC as an organization".

GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Better Prospects

A DOUBLE warning against over reaction to short term trends in higher education was delivered in Dundee last week at the Standing Conference of University Appointments Services.

Lord Boyle, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds and a former Conservative minister of education, informed the conference that the fact that the situation for graduates seeking employment is much easier this year than last (there are now about 20% more vacancies) underlines the danger of drawing long term conclusions about the future of university courses and of graduate careers on the basis of short term statistics.

Sir Kenneth Berrill's version of the same warning was a somewhat more sophisticated one. Speaking for the last time in public as Chairman of the University Grants Committee (he becomes chief economic adviser at the Treasury in October), Sir Kenneth outlined the difficulties and doubts that beset a chairman of the UGC.

Quoting the government's target of 750,000 students in higher education by 1981 (half of them in universities and half in polytechnics), Sir Kenneth said that planning for each subject that will be studied in universities by then was not easy. Attempts to define the different types of skill that will be needed in 1984 are a waste of time. Relatively few people go into careers that follow directly from their degrees.

Equally, unemployment among graduates is difficult to forecast and the biggest danger lies in reacting too quickly. When a bad year occurs, as in 1971, nothing can be done immediately to rectify the situation. The results of any change will not be seen until several years later.

Two basic difficulties beset planning for 1984. The first is that the system may not react at all to change and, paradoxically, the second is over reaction, or as Sir Kenneth terms it, the "bandwaggon effect".

Changing the ratio between the arts and sciences in universities from 55 science to 45 arts to 53 to 47 by 1976 means that for every new place provided in the sciences two have to be provided in the arts, and this is difficult in a system in which until recently the emphasis was the other way around. On the other hand the system can overreact because it is so decentralized. At present, Sir Kenneth said, universities are asking for expansion in biochemistry, pharmacy and biology—the move towards the life sciences. But universities all over the country are thinking the same way, and there is a danger that too many courses will be started.

Equally, when Lord Ashby as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Quality asked the UGC to conduct a survey on university teaching in pollution matters, the survey revealed that an enormous number of universities had moved with the times and introduced work on the subject into their courses.

When the university appointments officers at the conference were not being lectured on future trends in graduate employment, they were busy discussing the current situation. Chiefly they conclude, in the absence of final figures, that this year has been much better than last, which in turn was an improvement on 1971. The most notable trend is that many officers report that while industry has vacancies to offer, an increasing number of graduates are not interested in taking up the jobs. At the end of the year many predict there will still be jobs in industry going, and there will still be undergraduates on the "unemployed" list. More and more graduates want to look around before taking a job, and there is some evidence that industry in particular is under suspicion for its actions in 1971 when, in some cases, offers of jobs were withdrawn after they had been made. Now that the situation is brighter, and GEC, for example, has the better part of 600 graduate vacancies, many graduates do not want to know.

POLITICS

Shortage of Science

THE scientific community owes a debt of gratitude to the National Association of Conservative Graduates. Out of 1,304 motions to be debated at the Conservative Party annual conference to be held at Blackpool on October 10–13 the one and only motion to do with research and technology is proposed by this association. The Labour Party's agenda of 436 motions for their conference on October 1–5 contains no such item. The Liberals also had little time for science although energy policy was discussed on Wednesday afternoon of this week at their conference at Southport.

The Conservative motion asks the conference to deplore "the continued waste of money on inadequately founded national ventures in scientific research and in technology". However, the remainder of the motion calls for such projects (presumably not inadequately founded) to be "pressed forward in future on a multilateral or European basis".

Energy policy and environmental planning get a great deal of attention in the manifestos. The Labour Party is called upon by its members to implement an energy policy and also to establish a "working party to evaluate present energy resources and to consider ways of ensuring state exploration of all forms of energy". The Liberals called this week for a permanent energy commission to be established to advise the government and they also asked for an assessment of the future of nuclear energy, taking into account reactor safety, polluting effects and "the moral justification for storage of wastes for future generations to deal with". The Conservatives will not debate energy