WINDSCALE may go ahead from 15 May with the design and construction of a 1,200 tonne per year reprocessing facility for oxide nuclear fuel, if the Special Development Order (SDO) laid before the British parliament last week takes effect. The order is subject to "the negative resolution procedure"—which is to say it passes undebated unless a member of parliament opposes it. The Liberals have already done so, and a group of Labour MPs convened by Robin Cook (Edinburgh) are expected to follow suit this week. The result is that there must be a further debate on Windscale before the 15 May deadline.

"The later the better" said Leo Abse this week. Abse is one of the MPs opposed to the Windscale expansion, and he would like as long as possible before the debate "for public opinion to take effect". Friends of the Earth have a demonstration planned for Trafalgar Square on 29 April, and there is some conflict between those who would like the debate before the demonstration and those who would

Windscale to be debated again

like it after. Abse will see Michael Foot, Leader of the House, this week to impress on him that the issue "mustn't have the appearance of being manipulated"—as he clearly believes it has. "They laid the order the day we got back from the Easter recess" he said. "Government are anxious to get the matter through before public opinion builds up".

Frank Hooley, another MP opposed to Windscale, believes that the SDO will be carried whenever the debate takes place. "But I think opinion will move the other way—if only because of the costs". Effective safeguards, monitoring, and disposal of the waste will ultimately be seen to make the plant uneconomic, Hooley believes.

Another factor in the debate will undoubtedly be the Nuclear Non Proliferation Act signed by President Carter last month. The Act threatened to cut off all nuclear fuel supplies to the EEC unless the community agreed to renegotiate the supply treaty with the US. This 20-year-old treaty allows Europe to re-export the fuel or its products within its boundaries; so West Germany, for example, would be free to export waste to be reprocessed at Windscale or Cap la Hague in France. The treaty with Japan, on the other hand, allows no movement without US agreement.

The US Senate sub-Committee on energy and non-proliferation wrote to Carter in March expressing disgust at the "mockery" made of US non-proliferation policy by the expansion of reprocessing plants in Europe and it may be now that the open disavowal of US policy expressed by British Foreign Secretary David Owen in the last Windscale debate (22 March) is beginning to have its effect.

Robert Walgate

Poland plans hydrological atlas

DEPARTMENTAL interests are complicating the optimum use of Poland's water resources, according to K. Frankowski, Director of the Wroclaw provincial water conservancy directorate. Speaking on Warsaw Television, he stated that at present, every drop of water in Poland has several owners: reservoirs at power stations belong to the Ministry of Mining and Power, and all other reservoirs to local water conservancy directorates which ultimately come under the Ministry of Agriculture. The Odra, the Vistula, and all the canals come under Shipping, while water intake and effluent plants are the responsibility of the Ministry of Administration, Local Economy and Environment.

Poland has a relatively low water supply (50 thousand million m³/year), which, moreover fluctuates considerably over the year, so that in terms of water resources, Poland ranks 22nd in Europe, comparable only to the dry steppe areas of Ukraine and to the driest regions of Spain.

At present there exists on paper an 'Outline of the longterm plan of water economy in Poland', which en-

visages the construction of reservoirs in the Carpathians with an overall capacity of 3,700 million m³, flood-control and retention projects on the Vistula, Pilica and Bug and in the Mazurian lake district, and the planting of forests to hold back the run of surface waters and prevent soil erosion. To carry out all engineering works necessary to ensure Poland's water supply after 1990 will cost at the very least 1,500 million Zloty (£750 million).

According to Frankowski, while Poland's water resources remain under divided control, each of the Ministries concerned will continue to regard water as "free wealth" coming in unlimited quantities, and the plan will continue to exist on paper only. Already the piecemeal renovation of Poland's inland waterways by different authorities has led to anomalies, such as, for example, the upper reaches can accommodate larger barges than the lower. During the last few years considerable legislation has been passed on pollution-control and water utilisation; however, with an estimated three-fold increase in the total demand for water over the period 1970-1990, urgent action, rather

than legislation, would seem to be the key. Frankowski's broadcast urged the setting up of a single responsible body to co-ordinate all measures dealing with water conservation. But on what are such decisions to be based? Although a number of development studies have been carried out (partly financed by the UN), notably the plans for the Vistula and Odra basins, the definitive hydrological atlas of Poland, described as a breakthrough work for Polish science is still not ready. This *opus*, which will present the hydrological relations between the geographical environment and the climate... contain data concerning the water balance, water diffusion from river evaporation, snowfall, the supply of rainfall to water basins, groundwater... ice on rivers and lakes... the water levels in rivers and other water basins, the transport of debris by rivers, the effects of flood levels, and low-water levels in summertime... would appear to be essential for any comprehensive planning. Yet, according to Dr Juliusz Stachy, head of the production team, data gathering for the atlas has only "just crossed the half-way mark". Dr Stachy is sure that the atlas will be ready by 1980.

Vera Rich