

Mr van Trier pointed out that between 1970 and 1980, Community expenditure on research and development had increased by 18 per cent, but that out of the 20,000 million European Units of Account (EUA) (1 EUA = £0.56) which the member states spent on their energy and research programmes in 1980, only 1.5 per cent was spent jointly. The president of the committee, Hanna Walz, while endorsing Mr Van Trier's affirmation of the significance of Community research, pointed out that there is a considerable gap between the declared intentions of the Council of Ministers and its actions.

Other members of the committee thought that the time was ripe to set in motion a "real Community research policy", since major areas could not be adequately tackled by each country on its own. Dr Schuster said that Community research would continue to concentrate on specific areas, particularly nuclear power, energy and environment, and pointed out that the Community contribution in these areas is 30 per cent, 10 per cent and 20 per cent respectively of total Community spending.

Mr van Trier and the committee agreed that a European market should be created for micro-electronic components and products, but that coordinating national programmes would only be feasible for large projects. The companies themselves must establish relations in order to coordinate the proposed research programmes.

Jasper Becker

US Cabinet appointments

Conservatives in

Washington

One of the few bright spots for US environmentalists in the Cabinet appointments has been Mr Reagan's nomination of Mr James Buckley, a member of the US Senate from 1971 to 1977, as Under-Secretary of State for National Security, Science and Technology. If confirmed by the Senate, Mr Buckley will be directly responsible for the State Department's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. Under a reorganization plan being discussed in the White House, the bureau may also be given responsibility for nuclear non-proliferation policy.

Mr Buckley is a conservative Republican. He voted against the War Powers Act giving Congress greater control over presidential decisions, and also opposed the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), because it limited the United States to the construction of only two anti-ballistic missile sites — which were never built.

As a member of the Senate's environmental pollution subcommittee and its environmental science and technology subcommittee, Mr Buckley helped to forge much of the stringent environmental legislation of the 1970s. He clearly intends

to take a close personal interest in environmental issues in his new post. High on his agenda is discussion with Canada of the effects of acid rain from the north-east states. Another issue is international attempts to prevent the extinction of endangered species; Mr Buckley told his nomination hearing in the Senate last week that "as a friend of the snail darter [whose potential extinction was used to hold up a federal dam project] I look forward to extending my responsibilities".

One potential dispute has already been headed off by the State Department. In its preliminary proposals for budget cuts, the Office of Management and Budget had suggested eliminating the \$10 million contributed by the United States to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This — almost a third of the agency's budget — would have devastated UNEP's future programmes, but was successfully resisted by Mr Haig, and a contribution of \$7.2 million is being proposed. In his Senate hearing, Mr Buckley said this would be "foolhardy".

Nuclear non-proliferation policy will be more difficult to deal with but will be high on the new Administration's agenda, since India is already preparing to make a further application for the export of enriched uranium to its Tarapur nuclear plant. Mr Buckley told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Reagan Administration was completely reviewing non-proliferation strategy.

Mr Buckley, who ran for the Senate in Connecticut, had been tipped as the new administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. In fact, the White House announced last week the nomination of a Colorado attorney, Mrs Anne Gorsuch, a close political ally of Interior Secretary James Watt, to head the agency. Both nominations have generated protests from environmentalists.

David Dickson

UK medical research

Money to spend

A £350,000 windfall has landed in the hands of the British Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Laboratory, Cambridge. The money was donated quite unexpectedly by Mr Thomas Usher, chairman of the Canadian company, Dextran. Since Mr Usher first approached the laboratory last May, a fund has been set up to support research fellows and students over the next seven years.

The offer of money comes with no strings attached, and the company had previously had only brief contact with the laboratory — many years ago Dr Max Perutz gave Mr Usher some advice.

The staff of the laboratory has agreed with Mr Usher that the money should be used to support research staff, the most serious hole left by cuts in the Medical

Research Council's budget. The resulting fund will provide £50,000 a year for one to three-year fellowships, short fellowships for visiting scientists and studentships over the next seven years.

The scheme is to get under way in earnest next October. The trustees of the fund — Drs Sydney Brenner, director of the laboratory, Frederick Sanger, John Gurdon, Hugh Huxley and Aaron Klug — will decide on the next recipients in June.

Judy Redfearn

High-energy physics

China backs off

Washington

Economic problems have forced the People's Republic of China to postpone construction of a 50 GeV particle accelerator scheduled to be built near the Ming Tombs, north-west of Peking.

The accelerator, to have been built with the assistance of the US Department of Energy, was central to the agreement between China and the United States signed by President Carter and Vice-Premier Deng Xiao Ping in Washington two years ago.

US officials who visited China last month were told that although construction was being deferred as part of a major cutback in capital construction projects, the delay did not imply a reduced commitment to research and training in advanced science and technology. The officials feel, however, that a "softening" in China's previous commitment to high-energy physics is inevitable.

Under the agreement, the Department of Energy would have carried out much of the construction of the components of the accelerator, receiving purchase orders over a period of five years of between \$100 and \$200 million for work that would have been carried out at the national energy laboratories. Subsequently the terms were changed so that the Chinese would carry out most of the design and construction work, and the United States would only provide basic training and advice.

The Chinese have also told the National Aeronautics and Space Administration that they will have to postpone the planned purchase of a new US-built telecommunications satellite system, another major component of the science and technology agreement. Four major contractors had already discussed with the Chinese the specifications of such a system, and were preparing bids. In a letter, the head of the Chinese academy of space technology, Dr Ran Xin-Mon, has now said that China was being forced to reconsider the whole of its space programme in the light of its economic situation.

China is, however, continuing negotiations over the purchase of equipment to receive geophysical information from the LANDSAT remote sensing satellite. It has