

nesses in the data resulting from the calibration techniques used and alternative hypotheses that do not necessarily implicate CFCs.

However, the NASA data are still likely to be prominent in future debates on CFC controls. The proposed legislation would amend the Clean Air Act of 1970, due for renewal by Congress later this month, to shift the focus of EPA's actions from regulation to research. It would require EPA "to use statistical analysis of actual ozone measurements as an early warning system to guard against excessive ozone depletion", according to the Alliance for Responsible CFC Policy, the industry lobby which has been largely responsible for the proposed legislation.

Environmental groups have expressed strong opposition to the proposed legislation. Giving evidence to an oversight committee of the Senate Environment and Public Works, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council claimed that "legislation creating narrowly-defined factual conditions for the imposition of regulation in any form to protect the public against a serious environmental risk would be bad policy and a dangerous precedent".

The environmentalist group also criticized a provision in the Senate version of the bill which would restrain EPA from taking any further action without an international consensus that more regulation was necessary. In the past the US government has been the first to act on restricting CFCs; Norway, Sweden and Canada have followed with complete bans on aerosols, and the members of the European Economic Community agreed last year to reduce overall production.

National Academy of Sciences officials are no happier with the suggestion that they might be asked to judge whether or not there was sufficient evidence of a link between CFCs, ozone depletion and threats to human health to require additional regulation. They argue that their function should be restricted to evaluating the adequacy of the scientific data.

Industry remains confident both that it can hold the Administration back from any further controls in the short term and that it can persuade Congress to legislate a new approach to the control of CFCs which would survive into a new administration with potentially different values.

EPA has not announced any change in direction from the proposals published last year — but it is clearly sympathetic to the industry's point of view. At her confirmation hearings before the Senate, the new EPA administrator, Mrs Ann Gorsuch, said she understood that the theory of the stratospheric ozone layer was "highly controversial", and that "apparently there is a need for additional scientific data before the international scientific community would be willing to accept the ozone layer depletion theory as the basis for additional government action".

David Dickson

Soviet natural resources

Try harder comrades

The Soviet Union has launched yet another drive against waste of energy and raw materials. A resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR published recently calls for a radical improvement in the savings of such materials in all branches of production and an increase in the role of scientists in effecting these economies.

The new resolution, while praising the work of "leading collectives", admits that there is considerable waste. The consumption of raw materials and energy per unit of national income, it says, is higher than the "best world indices". Also, inefficient mining and extraction processes mean that large quantities of coal, oil and ore remain underground.

To cure these ills, the resolution urges a stringent economy regime, more modern management methods and a mass publicity campaign. The State Committee for Science and Technology, the Academy of Sciences and the various production ministries are to undertake research aimed at reducing the specific energy and resource consumption of industry and maximizing the use of recycled resources.

The ministries involved in education are to improve the level of teaching of economic disciplines, while Party courses and organizations such as the Komsomols are to study the problems from a political theoretic standpoint. The "Znanie" ("Knowledge") society, which coordinates and supports the work of science clubs and societies throughout the Soviet Union, is to prepare material demonstrating the correct use of resources in the economic strategy of the Party. The press, cinema, television, radio and the "Plakat" poster press have all been mobilized in the efficiency drive, and a complex scheme of sanctions for energy wasters and financial incentives for the successful energy savers is being worked out.

Special attention continues to be paid to the petrochemical sector. Earlier this year, the petrochemical industry was hived off from the chemical industry into a ministry of its own. In addition, it has now been decided to establish a special State Committee for the Supply of Oil Products.

At the same time, a crash programme for power station construction has been launched, concentrating on the nuclear sector. At a two-day meeting in mid-July on nuclear power, Dr Anatolii Aleksandrov, president of the Academy of Sciences stressed the need for further automation in the operation of nuclear power stations, and the importance of speeding up the construction of fast-neutron reactors. About 25 million kW of nuclear generating capacity is to be commissioned in the next five years, three times more than during the previous five years.

Vera Rich

Heat on BNFL

The depressed demand for electricity in the United Kingdom and the increasing public distrust of things nuclear are the main worries for the future of state-owned British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL), reflected in the company's tenth annual report published last week. The report reveals a £3 million fall in profits, to £12.9 million, in spite of an increase in sales.

The strength of sterling, together with high interest rates and the inevitable effects of inflation have combined to reduce BNFL's international competitiveness. Defence cuts, and the government's rigorous policy of "cash limits" on BNFL's other main customer, the Central Electricity Generating Board, have reduced the need for enriched uranium and the closure of the outdated diffusion enrichment plant at Capenhurst has been brought forward to the end of 1982.

BNFL chairman Sir John Hill said when presenting the report that further business expansion for BNFL "is tied inextricably to the future of nuclear power as a major energy source and in particular to the restoration of growth of electricity demand in the United Kingdom".

This commitment is underlined by Sir John's efforts to counter the flow of propaganda against the building of new nuclear power stations — "Despite persistent attack from anti-nuclear factions, the case for nuclear power with its inherent safety and economic advantage, remains intact".

Charles Wenz

French nuclear energy

Summer strife

French energy normally flags in August, when the nation takes its traditional holidays; but not so this year. The Mitterrand government is flinging itself towards its first full parliament, wishing to get a number of issues quickly under its belt before there can be too much shouting. But with one of them — nuclear power — it is already having some trouble.

The French environmentalists got short shrift under Giscard d'Estaing. Mitterrand, a socialist, not beholden to big business, appeared to offer them more — he promised a halt to nuclear construction, a national debate and even a referendum. They voted for him.

Now things look a little different: the parliamentary debate on nuclear power will be in October, and may last less than a week. There is no longer talk of a referendum; nuclear construction continues at many sites; and, as if to underline the situation, Mitterrand's