Comité has important powers — such as over whether unsuccessful laboratories should be closed, or new ones opened — and the technicians' and administrators' union, affiliated to the communist-led CGT, has been campaigning ever since for its voice to be heard again in that forum.

Chevènement agrees, and hasty changes are being made in order to allow technicians and administrators to attend the autumn meeting of the Comité. Beyond that, there must be a reform of CNRS statutes, which will probably wait for the National Colloquium; but the reform will be thorough, and could even involve the abandonment of the present two-tier directorship of CNRS, which has a scientific president and an executive director with overlapping responsibilities.

In a further move, the Ministry of Research and Technology has begun to appoint its own staff. They will be organized in *missions d'orientation*, concerned with the various goals of Chevènement's policy. Directors have been named for four. "Renewable energy and conservation" will be headed by Philippe Chartier, an expert in biomass from the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique; "biotechnology" by Pierre Douzou, an ex-professor at the Museum of Natural History; "electronics" by Abel Farnoux, a television-tube manufacturer; and "employment and the conditions of work" (a matter of great concern to Chevènement, and the government as a whole) by an ex-cabinet maker and present assistant lecturer on working conditions at the University of Paris IV, Albert Detraz.

Robert Walgate

British universities

Job losses inevitable

News is emerging from British universities on how they plan to contract along the lines indicated by the University Grants Committee early in August. Not surprisingly, those universities singled out for the largest cuts in their recurrent grants over the next three years are among the first to react. Some estimate that they need to lose between 50 and 150 academic posts and up to 450 non-academic posts. Although all concerned hope that posts can be lost through early retirement and voluntary redundancy, it seems that compulsory redundancies are inevitable.

The biggest problem for universities singled out for cuts in income of more than 20 per cent is that action needs to be taken quickly. The senate of Brunel University, for example, is this week considering a report from a working party which recommends losing 110 non-academic posts, preferably by the end of this year, and 50 academic posts by April 1982.

The University of Aston in Birmingham, which says that it must do away with 150 academic and 450 non-academic posts to comply with the grants committee's wishes, has a

London to respond with more committees

The University of London, which has been agonizing over its future organization for some time, has now set up four subject review committees to advise on the resource allocation most likely to maintain high academic standards. This move comes just a few weeks after the university court told the constituent colleges how much money they will have to spend in the current academic year and shortly before the Committee on Academic Organisation, under its chairman Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, is due to issue its final report on how the university should be re-constructed.

The committees, which have been established too late to have much bearing on this year's allocations, have nevertheless been charged with the task of reporting quickly. The hope is that recommendations made early in 1982 can

be used in shaping the university to its reduced grant in future years.

The move may also provide alternatives to the recommendations made by the Swinnerton-Dyer committee in its interim report. Those included the unpopular suggestion that Chelsea College be closed and that some of the smaller colleges should merge.

Four independent chairmen have been appointed to the committees whose detailed membership will be announced later. The committees are on physical sciences, under the chairmanship of Sir Sam Edwards from the University of Cambridge; biological sciences, under Sir James Beament of the University of Cambridge; languages under Professor J. Cruickshank from the University of Sussex; and social studies under Sir Alec Cairncross of the University of Oxford.

Judy Redfearn

similar problem. Its decision last week to inform the Department of Employment that 95 staff will be redundant within a month aroused strong opposition from the Association of University Teachers, the academics' trade union, which threatened to take the university to court at the first hint of compulsory redundancy. The university administration claims that these redundancies are for non-academic staff who have already opted to take early

William Shelton, MP for Streatham in London, who has replaced Neil Macfarlane as Britain's Under-Secretary responsible for science in the Department of Education and Science

retirement or voluntary redundancy with compensation of up to nearly three times annual salary, but compulsory redundancies seem inevitable sooner or later.

Other universities, however, are taking it a bit more slowly. The University of Bradford plans to meet its 30 per cent drop in income by 1983–84 by losing between 150 and 180 academic staff over three years. Consultations between the senate and heads of departments should result in a strategy by December.

Universities with more modest cuts in income are also taking more time, some of

them hoping to get by without compulsory redundancy. The University of Cambridge plans to shed 100 academic posts by lowering the compulsory retirement age from 67 to 65 years and by filling only essential posts that fall vacant. It plans to make further savings by, amongst other things, abolishing a student travel fund, curtailing sabbatical leave and abolishing examiners' fees. And at the University of Bristol, where it has been suggested that academics take a cut in salary, no decision has yet been taken. Much still needs to be resolved, however, before the future shape of the British university system becomes clear. During the next few weeks, universities will be presenting the grants committee with detailed plans, some of which will go against the committee's original advice. The University of Bradford, for example, would prefer to cut its physics and chemistry departments rather than biology. And the University of Leeds plans to make cuts across the board before resorting to selective cuts between departments.

Some universities are clinging to one last hope: that Sir Keith Joseph, new Secretary of State for Education and his new Under-Secretaries, William Waldegrave for higher education and William Shelton for science, can be persuaded to give the universities more time.

Judy Redfearn

Polish universities

Poised to strike

Solidarity members at Krakow's Jagiellonian University and the nearby Mining and Metallurgical Academy (AGH) have declared a state of "strike readiness" in protest against unilateral amendments by the Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Technology to the new draft law on higher education. Many

other universities and colleges throughout Poland have reiterated the anger of the academic community at what one protestor called the "outrageous" amendments. Both the new Independent Students' Association (NZS) and the "old" Socialist Union of Polish Students have issued protest statements, but because of the summer vacation, so far only the AGH students have had the chance to organize any action (their chapter of NZS has also declared "strike readiness"). NZS is still hoping for the situation to be resolved by negotiation. However, if necessary, it would take a referendum of its members on possible strike action as soon as the universities reconvene.

Dr Michal Pulawski, an assistant lecturer at the Jagiellonian University and chairman of its Solidarity chapter, who actually declared the alert, was interviewed on Polish radio last week. He again stressed that the Krakow academics hoped that commonsense would prevail and a strike would not be necessary. Nevertheless, he said, the proposed amendments — introduced in spite of the ministry's pledges to submit the bill to the Sejm (parliament) without further changes — would fundamentally alter the law. They relate, he said, to the financing of higher education, the right of higher educational institutions to teach a plurality of world views, and the ways of hiring and dismissing the employees of higher educational establishments. (The latter is a sensitive issue in Poland, where the academic purges of 1968 were a grim experience for the younger generation of intellectual activists.)

The academic community was particularly indignant, Pulawski said, about the way the changes had been introduced "without consultation and without discussion". Indeed, a back-up message from the Solidarity chapter at Krakow Polytechnic suggested that the ministry had deliberately tried to rush things through, granting the academics "barely one week" to make their stance known. Since strike readiness was declared at Jagiellonian University and AGH, talks have been resumed. Last week, meetings included a discussion of the controversial amendments between Professor Hieronim Kubiak, a secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, and the various university rectors, many of whom have been elected by the new democratic procedures which the amendments would, presumably, negate. During a lively encounter between the minister Dr Jerzy Nawrocki and journalists from the Club of Educational Publicists, Dr Nawrocki seemed to be preparing for a partial climb-down on the amendments. Nothing was final, he said; his ministry would "shortly" be considering all the views expressed, and would be starting a new round of discussions with the relevant trade unions and student organizations.

Vera Rich

Belgian nuclear energy Safety in question

Brussels

Serious failings in Belgium's nuclear safety policy have been brought to light in a new report. Commissioned by the Belgian government from the European Commission pool of nuclear experts, the report describes as "unhealthy" the manner in which the new plants Doel 3 and Tihange 2 are being constructed.

The report points out that in Belgium no safety survey is carried out on a nuclear power station until shortly before the plant goes active. By this time any outside expert advice is virtually useless, for either the plant cannot be altered, or at best only an uneasy compromise can be reached.

Ironically, the Belgian government had promised to tighten up nuclear power security following the Three Mile Island accident, but little has happened since then. The European Community experts now propose that Belgium should adopt the American procedural system whereby constructors of a nuclear power station must submit an initial safety study on which outside experts can suggest improvements. Then, before the plant goes into operation, a second study is carried out to demonstrate that the existing safety regulations and the new recommendations have been adhered to.

So far the Belgians have rejected this approach on the grounds that it takes too long and is too complicated.

The nuclear power industry's problems do not stop there. The International Atomic Energy Authority has already reprimanded Belgium for not engaging the 50 personnel it considers necessary to deal with matters of nuclear safety. The environmental group, Greenpeace, has been trying to stop vessels leaving Zeebrugge harbour with nuclear waste. And the 17 technicians at present working in Belgian plants are now threatening to go on strike because of a dispute over how the power stations are being run.

The workers are employed by a private company, Vincotte, which the Belgian socialist parties are trying to have replaced by a public authority. The Belgian government has been unable to reach agreement on this point and instead last month created two new departments in the Ministry of Work and Employment and the Ministry of Public Health, with responsibilities including the supervision of the work done by Vincotte. The money for this would come out of a special tax on the electricity produced.

This arrangement has so incensed the technicians at Vincotte that they have given notice of their intention to down tools. Furthermore, Vincotte's director has stated publicly that all power has now passed into the hands of those who do not have the necessary knowledge.

Jasper Becker

Change at OSTP

President Reagan's science adviser, Dr George A. Keyworth, has announced the reorganization of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), which he heads. Two of the three previous associate directors under Dr Keyworth's predecessor, Dr Frank Press, will be staying on. Dr Benjamin Huberman, previously associate director for national security, space and international affairs, becomes deputy director of OSTP. And Dr Dennis Prager, who had been associate director for human resources and social and economic services, becomes assistant director for life science and institutional relations.

Keyworth — a busy man at home as well as abroad (see p. 251)

Four others have been appointed as assistant directors — John Marcum (energy and natural resources); Victor Reis (national security); Edward McGaffigan (international affairs); and Douglas Pewitt (general science). Major Thomas Johnson has been appointed a special assistant to Dr Keyworth, and is expected to be involved in issues concerning military technology.

David Dickson

US science policy

Room at the top

Washington

Members of the National Science Board (NSB) — the group of scientists appointed by the President to be responsible for the policies of the National Science Foundation (NSF) — have begun to debate whether they should play a more active role in national discussions on science and technology policy, urged on by their chairman, Dr Lewis Branscomb. Chief scientist at IBM, and at one time widely-tipped as President Carter's science adviser, Dr Branscomb has made little secret of his feeling that, rather than concern itself strictly with the research and education programmes supported by the foundation, the board should tackle broader policy issues such as the health of US technology and science and engineering education in general.

Other members of the board are less cer-