lems in congested urban areas. The venture, Offshore Power Systems, reportedly has laid off 60 percent of its work force and put off building a manufacturing plant near Jacksonville, Florida, now that its only customer, New Jersey's Public Service Electric and Gas Company, has shelved an order for four reactor units.

Moreover, the nuclear fuel industry continues to be plagued with a series of nettlesome problems. The government's enrichment capacity is fully committed and private companies are developing cold feet over building new plants; there's a shortage of reprocessing capacity; and unresolved questions of waste disposal, although not intractable, continue to provide grist for the critics advocating a moratorium on construction of new reactors.

Against this somber background, energy conservation has begun during the past year to seem not merely attractive and feasible but essential. A year ago, as the FEA points out in its Project Independence report, not much was known about the savings and the economic and social costs that might be incurred from conservation proposals that otherwise seemed technically practical. Recently, however, a number of econometric studies—prompted partly by last winter's abruptly imposed conservation measures—have started to clarify these linkages. The studies have tended to show that energy demand is more sensitive to price than was previously believed, while economic growth appears less dependent on energy growth.

This new perspective has given rise to a surprisingly broad national consensus that energy growth can be reduced substantially, if gradually, without great economic or social hardship. (On the other hand, some thoughtful analysts are convinced that between its sinking economy and shrinking resources the United States will be lucky to achieve *any* growth in energy for an indefinite time and that hardship may be inevitable.)

One of the first proposals that helped dispel the faddishness of conservation and bring it into the realm of serious debate came last March from the President's Council on Environmental Quality. Speaking for itself, not the President, the CEQ's "Half and Half Plan" urged adherence to an average net per capita growth rate of energy demand of 1.4 percent a year, the average rate that prevailed from 1947 to 1972. Half of this restrained growth would be achieved by real expansion of energy production and half by conservation. Allowing for projected population growth, this would correspond to growth in gross energy consumption of 1.8 percent a year compared with the 4.3 percent rate sustained through the 1960's and early 1970's.

The Ford Foundation's Energy Policy Project, reflecting a mostly liberal and academic point of view, later advocated a 2 percent growth rate. Next, the FEA, placing heavy emphasis on conservation, concluded that a 2 percent growth rate could be achieved with government intervention where normal market forces work too slowly or at counterpurposes. And in December, the Committee for Economic Development, composed of some 200 leading businessmen and educators, advocated a growth target of 2.9 percent a year as part of an energy policy that would make conservation a "full partner," with strenous efforts to develop new resources.

These studies do disagree on important questions—such as the level of oil imports to be tolerated, priorities for research, and prescriptions for the government's conservation actions—but they are more notable for their reflection of an emerging conservation consensus.

President Ford could do worse than to sanctify this consensus. Achieving a targeted rate of energy growth, however, implies involvement in economic planning and management well beyond what Western governments are used to. Some observers, including physicist Alvin Weinberg, regard the Project Independence study as an historic step in this direction. Imprecise as it may be, Weinberg (who directed the FEA's research policy office until last month) thinks of the study as "the first major use by a Western government of large-scale systems analysis . . . a very important departure in the way government plans its activities."

Although some people have criticized the FEA for failing to present a "blueprint" for national energy security as originally intended, the report's more-or-less impartial analysis of options will probably guarantee it longer and more useful service as a touchstone for policy.

Briefing

Rocky Eyes Science Advice

The White House has announced that Vice President Nelson Rockefeller will study the question of rearranging the machinery for presidential science advising as one of his first assignments. Rocky will thus step into waters already stirred by controversy within scientific circles. Under the present system, the Director of the National Science Foundation also serves as Presidential Science Adviser, but without a White House office or a portfolio for military and security affairs. Two years ago, President Nixon abolished the old science office in the White House, and the present system has been in effect ever since.

However, a number of scientific organizations, a blue ribbon committee of the National Academy of Sciences, and even the Senate, has come out supporting a different system, in which a council of science advisers modeled on the Council of Economic Advisers would be set up in the White House. On 27 December, the National Council of the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) also endorsed this proposal. At a press conference, FAS chairman Philip Morrison said that the feeling of the council on the matter was that NSF was generically incapable of performing the science advisory function. And in his own statement FAS executive director and chief lobbyist Jeremy J. Stone went even further and criticized the President's science adviser, NSF Director H. Guyford Stever, for inadequately representing the desire of the scientific community for a council, since Stever has remained publicly vague about which option he has urged the Administration to follow in recent private meetings with high officials.

Where Rockefeller is tending on the issue—toward strengthening the existing system, creating a council, or something else—may be learned if he accepts an invitation to meet on 6 January with the Committee of Scientific Society Presidents.—D.S.