The House space science subcommittee, chaired by Representative Bill Nelson (D–FL), has added legislation to its fiscal year 1987 authorization bill that would replace SIG-Space with a permanent National Aeronautics and Space Council to be headed by the Vice President. The problem with SIG-Space is that it is subordinated to the National Security Council and operates in secret, say subcommittee staffers. Moreover, it only comes together when there is a policy crisis, which means that the turf lines are already drawn. A permanent body less dominated by the national security agencies might get around those problems, they say. On the other hand, it is not at all clear that anyone at the White House really wants that kind of help. ■ M. MITCHELL WALDROP

France Cuts Research to Fund New Jobs

Paris

The new conservative French government headed by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac has announced that it plans to cut public spending on civilian research and development by 8% in 1986 compared to the level that had been proposed by the previous socialist administration.

However, according to the new minister for research, Alain Devaquet, science remains an important priority for the new government. In particular, Devaquet has promised not to dismantle either the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) or the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM)—two of the nation's main research funding agencies—as had been demanded by some of the government's supporters (*Science*, 7 March, p. 1061).

The cuts in the research budget formed part of a reshuffle in public spending plans that included increased efforts to create jobs for young people, and substantial extra grants for farmers and loss-making automobile and steel producers. The money taken from the planned research spending totals $460 million and covers almost one-third of these new commitments.

Substantial losers will be the CNRS, INSERM, and the Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), which will lose $134 million, $39.5 million, and $33 million, respectively. There will also be significant reductions in the funds allocated to both industrial and agricultural research.

Speaking at a press conference in Paris last week, Devaquet said that although he regretted the cuts, he hoped to be able to put research funding on a more stable basis than in the past few years, when alternating periods of expansion and contraction had created a "concertina effect."

Science no longer has its own ministry under the new administration, since Devaquet—formerly a personal adviser to Prime Minister Chirac—has, at his own suggestion, accepted that his responsibilities be linked with higher education rather than technology, and his position is therefore that of a junior minister in the Ministry of National Education.

However, he has also successfully argued that his responsibilities should not be limited to the CNRS and universities, but should include the research activities of other agencies, such as the National Center for Space Studies (CNES) and the CEA. Officials in Paris say that this will retain one of the main innovations of the previous government, a single budget for research allowing direct comparison of different priorities. ■

DAVID DICKSON

Johnston Drops Opposition to CEBAF

Senator Bennett Johnston (D–LA), a longtime critic of the way the proposed Continuous Electron Beam Accelerator Facility (CEBAF) has evolved, says he will now support constructing the $200-million machine. Only last February, Johnston warned Energy Secretary John Herrington that the accelerator, which is scheduled to be built in Newport News, Virginia, might have to wait another year or more for funding. Johnston indicated then that he would withhold his support for CEBAF because he was upset by an Administration proposal to cut river navigation and Strategic Petroleum Reserve projects in Louisiana.

"I am interested in getting it done," says Johnston, who now says he is satisfied that the technology problems related to the project have been resolved. As the ranking minority member on the Senate appropriations subcommittee on energy and water development, Johnston has exercised strong influence over committee actions in the areas of nuclear and high-energy physics. He has been critical of the management of the project by Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA), arguing that the initial design failed to employ the latest technology.

In particular, Johnston has been concerned about the original choice of a pulse stretch ring to produce a continuous electron stream from high-power klystron tubes. The performance of the 0.5- to 4-billion-electron-volt (GeV) accelerator could degrade under circumstances where the klystrons were stressed. The original design was dumped in August 1985 in favor of using a linear accelerator, superconducting cavities, and low-power klystron tubes to produce a continuous electron beam.

Bennett Johnston *"I am interested in getting it done."*

Created in 1980, SURA is comprised of 35 universities and colleges. It was chosen as the prime contractor by the Department of Energy (DOE) in 1983 after competing with Argonne National Laboratory and three other contenders. DOE made the selection after the Nuclear Science Advisory Committee (NSAC) in April 1983 endorsed the SURA design. Although the panel expressed concern about SURA's lack of experience in constructing and running a major facility, NSAC backed the plan because it (i) promised to create 35 faculty positions; (ii) allowed for accelerator enhancement to 6 GeV; and (iii) ironically, was seen as less risky than the Argonne design.

In the past 2 years, Johnston has been keeping a close eye on the accelerator's management and has ordered several General Accounting Office reports on the project's status. The latest GAO report faults the department for not issuing its own technical proposal as a basis for judging proposals of contractors. Had DOE done so, says GAO, SURA's initial design for the accelerator might not have been based on technology that was less than state of the art. Johnston credits Hermann Grunder, who took charge of the project in June 1985, with restoring confidence in the project. ■

MARK CRAWFORD