cells were not to be passed on remained in effect. Roche subsequently entered into an agreement with Genentech for the production of interferon from the cells.

The first legal action came in September 1980. Roche, in a pre-emptive strike, sued Golde, Koeffler and the University of California, seeking a declaratory judgement that the university had no claim on or interest in the cells or Roche's use of them. The university countersued, accusing Genentech of unlawfully using its property and Roche of unlawfully taking it.

The case was to go to trial in May. According to attorneys for both sides, there

was no one event that led to the settlement last week; Golde speculates that Roche decided to settle because of "worries about bad publicity of a trial".

The settlement makes no determination of facts with regard to ownership of the cells, but Golde believes it will nevertheless have "a profound effect on interactions between educational institutions and the private sector". The university successfully maintained its claim to property rights, Golde says, while maintaining as well the rights of researchers to share that property freely and openly for scientific purposes.

Stephen Budiansky

British universities

Tenure guarded

THE British government's decision to spend £100 million over the next three years on support for information technology and bringing new blood into universities received a cautious — not to say suspicious — welcome from the Association of University Teachers (AUT) at its recent council meeting. The caution stemmed from AUT's fear that many of the appointments to be made under the new scheme may be subject to waiver clauses denying security of tenure to those appointed, and thus undermine AUT's attempts to preserve that principle.

According to AUT, some 3,000 jobs in academic and related categories have been lost in Britain since the cutbacks in recurrent grants announced by the University Grants Committee in 1981: so far the redundancies have all been achieved through voluntary means, but recent proposals from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals indicate that attempts will be made to dismantle tenure in order to clear the way for further redundancies. The battle for security of tenure for full-time posts now seems likely to be fought at the University of Aston in Birmingham. But apart from this main battle, AUT is convinced that an estimated 10,000 contract researchers in universities and other institutions are being denied a reasonable degree of job security under existing arrangements and so are being deterred from pursuing a career in research. In particular, part-time researchers who are paid by the universities themselves seem to be getting a poor deal.

Under a new career structure agreement made 18 months ago, researchers funded by the Medical Research Council, on the other hand, seem to get rather a good deal. Contracts are either for a fixed period — non-renewable except under special circumstances — or for permanent tenured posts. AUT feels this arrangement avoids the situation in which quite senior researchers, accustomed to having their contracts renewed regularly, suddenly find themselves out of a job when funding dries up. But the Medical Research Council is unusual in this respect: most of the researchers funded by the Science and Engineering Research Council, for example, are on short-term appointments.

The Science and Engineering Research Council, in collaboration with the University Grants Committee, will be dispensing a large proportion of the money now available for information technology and for bringing new blood into the universities, apparently under existing rules. AUT now wonders if the existing rules are good enough, and is to pursue this point with Mr William Waldegrave, minister for higher education.

Tim Beardsley

Nuclear waste

Congress digs deeper

Washington

A SUSTAINED five-year effort to establish a national nuclear waste policy has finally borne fruit. In the waning hours of the lame-duck session, Congress compromised on legislation that calls for the construction of two geological repositories, a "monitored retrievable storage" facility and at least one interim storage site for spent fuel as a stopgap. Construction of the first repository could begin as early as 1989 if all goes according to plan. (The bill was passed through a parliamentary manoeuvre that circumvented usual House procedures which had seemed certain to kill the bill by delaying action beyond the few hours left before adjournment.)

The most controversial provision in the compromise — and a significant victory for the nuclear power industry — is the federal government's acceptance of responsibility for spent fuel that exceeds the on-site storage capacity of reactors. The industry has maintained that unless the government provides this interim "away-from-reactor" (AFR) storage of spent fuel, some

of a repository will be subject to environmental impact review and to legal challenges. And, following the threat of a filibuster from Senator William Proxmire, whose home state of Wisconsin is considered to be a prime site for a granite repository, a very strong role for state governors was written into the site selection process: a vote of both houses of Congress will be required to override a governor's objection to the siting of a repository or AFR storage facility in his state.

The bill sets a tight schedule for the site selection and construction of the deep geological repositories, which are generally considered to offer the most permanent solution to nuclear waste disposal. The Department of Energy will have initially to pick five sites for possible study; by 1985, the list will be narrowed to three which will be characterized in detail. The President is required to make a final selection for the first repository site by 1987, with a decision from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission by 1989 on whether to issue a construction permit. A second repository site will be chosen three years later.

All operating and construction costs are to be covered by a fee on nuclear generated electricity, initially set at 0.1 per cent per kilowatt-hour. Military waste is not covered by this bill.

The bill also authorizes research and development on waste packaging, on repository design and on increasing on-site storage capacity for spent fuel at reactors. Included in the research and development programme is construction of a small test facility which will contain up to 100 canisters of high-level reprocessed waste or spent fuel and which will be used to study how well packaging and geological repositories can contain radionuclides. An unanswered question is whether the site selection process for the full-scale repositories may be on too fast a schedule, given the overlapping schedule for the research and development programme: the test facility is scheduled to begin operation by 1990, one year after construction of the first repository is to begin.

Stephen Budiansky

of the older commercial reactors will have to shut down within a few years. Environmental groups have opposed AFR, fearing that it will become the *de facto* permanent storage facility.

Environmentalists did win on two other points. First, any final decisions on siting