

project has now degenerated to the level of intra-European squabbling about money. France and Switzerland, who both stand to benefit from the laboratory's location, have responded to a demand they they should pay more towards the final cost, but not as much as Germany and Britain had asked for. The outcome of the meeting to be held later this month will hang on whether Germany is satisfied with the extra payment (see opposite).

Opinions within the scientific community inevitably differ about the merits of this project. Particle physicists are enthusiastic, others range from the lukewarm to the sceptical. But the truth is that the LHC is the world's cheapest and quickest way of testing the validity of what is the standard model of particle physics at an energy at which the test is likely to be decisive. The cost is not so huge that the European members of CERN could not regard that as a gift to the next millennium (just over five years from now). The best hope is that the project goes ahead.

If matters continue to deteriorate, the European members of CERN should quickly bite the bullet of pride and declare that the future of the LHC must depend on recruiting other partners to full membership of CERN. Since the collapse of plans for the Superconducting Super-Collider in Texas, US (and Japanese?) membership has seemed natural. Arranging for that would take diplomacy and time and would cause delay. But that would be preferable to the abandonment of a decade's aspirations that CERN's electron-accelerator tunnel could be used for even better things. □

## GATT again in limbo

**The US administration has let the new tariff agreement drift too long — and dangerously.**

REPORTS of the political fragility of President Bill Clinton are probably exaggerated, but probably not by much. While the US Congress prepares for the recess in which the majority of its members must fight for re-election, leaving health-care reform on the back burner for the time being, while Cuban policy is developed by daily iterations and while the invasion of Haiti has acquired (by public introspection) the status of an event that has happened, the latest alarm is that the Congress may not now pass the legislation required to give effect by the United States to the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). That would be a calamity of the first order.

The immediate difficulty is that the administration has an obligation, under the legislation intended to control the federal deficit, to suggest how the reduction of federal revenues expected to follow reduced tariffs on US imports should be offset. It has not yet done so. That gives sectional opponents of provisions of the GATT agreement an opportunity to pick apart the agreement which, when ratified by its signatories, will have the status of a treaty. The danger now is that, with the November elections likely to increase the strength of the Republican opposition, opponents of the GATT agreement will be tempted to sit on their hands,

holding over the issue for the 104th Congress (which will assemble in January) and delaying the planned application of the new agreement on 1 January. If that happens, ratification by the United States will be a matter of chance.

It seems not to be appreciated in the United States what a disaster that would be. The first casualty would be everybody's prosperity. The second would be the poorest countries of the world, to which this agreement offers important routes for trading out of poverty. The third will be the willingness of other states to spend years negotiating with the United States on matters such as this — the Uruguay Round began life in 1986 — when the outcome can so easily be derailed by a balance of political forces domestic to the United States. □

## Another sister journal

**The impending publication of *Nature Medicine* is a welcome development of long-standing policy.**

ELSEWHERE in this issue are glossy advertisements announcing the publication next January of the third of *Nature's* sister journals, *Nature Medicine*. The immediate objective, as with *Nature Genetics* (April 1992) and *Nature Structural Biology* (January 1994) is to provide *Nature* proper with a more intelligent way of responding to claims on its space from an important section of the research community, in this case those working in biomedical research. But none of this implies that *Nature* will no longer publish biomedical research, even that with evident clinical implications. The record in the past two years in genetics and structural biology is ample proof of that. But *Nature Medicine*, following the high standards of *Nature* itself, will be able to publish research at greater length (if necessary) as well as material whose importance is more obviously clinical than would be appropriate for *Nature*.

Sisterhood apart, *Nature Medicine* will make its own decisions about what to publish within the general framework of an editorial policy modelled on *Nature's*. The feasibility of that should be evident from the experience of *Nature Genetics*, which in less than two years has quarried a distinguished place in the literature. (*Nature Structural Biology* seems to be following the same path.)

*Nature Medicine* has other goals, notably to bridge the present gulf (such as it may be) between those whose interests are predominantly in biomedical research and those who are primarily physicians. For that reason, it will pay particular attention to the clarity of its presentation. Inevitably, there will be much about what is known by the catchphrase molecular medicine, quickly penetrating most fields of medical practice, but other techniques resting on laboratory research — magnetic resonance imaging is just one example — will also be grist to its mill. Interested readers of *this* journal will by now have guessed that the third sister-journal is unlikely to be the last and that these developments may collectively lend themselves to the electronic distribution of scientific information in interesting ways. □