facturers into producing a product that provides less of a hazard to the environment, but more of a hazard to people.

The scenario leading up to the abrupt policy reversal of federal agencies last week is an object lesson in how the lobby system can overreact to produce a result that is acceptable neither to the harassed manufacturer nor to the concerned consumer. As evidence began to accumulate about the contribution of phosphate detergents to the eutrophication of lakes and rivers (the stimulation of plant life at the expense of the oxygen supply to other aquatic organisms), they became an ideal object on which environmentalists could vent their anger. A congressional committee in April last year recommended that detergent manufacturers should be made to remove phosphates from their products by 1972, the Canadian government banned phosphate detergents from that date, several states and counties, including Indiana and New York, outlawed the sale of phosphate detergents, and housewives began to switch to detergents labelled as phosphate-free. In addition, countless other state legislatures have bills pending before them, enjoining manufacturers either to remove or severely restrict the amount of phosphate in their detergents.

Flailed by the public and Congress, detergent manufacturers set to work developing alternatives to phosphates in detergents—the chief role of phosphates is to soften the water. The most promising substitute seemed to be nitrilotriacetic acid (NTA), and chemical manufacturers were hard pushed to meet orders from the detergent manufacturers. But doubts about the carcinogenicity and teratogenicity of NTA, first voiced by Dr Samuel Epstein, then a pathologist at Harvard, led eventually to a voluntary ban on the substance by detergent manufacturers in December last year. That ban was upheld last week by the federal agencies charged with protecting public health, chiefly on the basis of a study carried out at the National Cancer Institute, which produced no direct evidence of carcinogenicity at low dose levels, but which nevertheless failed to remove the doubts.

After that setback, manufacturers began to substitute caustic materials—such as sodium hydroxide—in place of phosphates. This led to action by the FDA, forcing some products to be labelled as toxic. Detergent manufacturers protest that they cannot produce a non-toxic substitute for phosphates, and legislators were continuing to force them to produce phosphate-free detergents. Finally, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Surgeon-General decided last week to advise the housewife to choose detergents containing phosphates.

AEC

How To Sell Cannikin

by our Washington Correspondent

It has been estimated that Washington boasts more public relations personnel per square mile than any other city in the world. While most of these are hired to impress their clients' views on the Federal Government, the government itself has a small army of information officers whose role is to keep the public informed of departmental and agency projects and policies. The difference between the two groups is that the lobbyists are expected to deal in propaganda, while the government public relations officers are expected to deal in facts.

That at least is the theory, but few people accept it as the fact. A particularly fine example of how one particular government agency, the Atomic Energy Commission, set about selling a potentially distasteful project, the explosion of a nuclear weapon under Amchitka Island in 1969, and how it intends to use the public relations experience gained in that exercise to sell the Cannikin project, was uncovered last week by Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska. Gravel, a vociferous opponent of the Cannikin nuclear test scheduled to take place under Amchitka Island in October, published in the *Congressional Record* an internal AEC report describing how the AEC "is running a well-oiled, well-financed, well-coordinated machine to tell Alaskans and other Americans about the need for Cannikin".

Gravel's chief complaint is that the AEC report provides ample evidence that the commission dismissed out of hand the views of its opponents by suggesting that their opposition to the test was motivated by a desire for headlines, disillusionment with the political system or by opposition to the ABM. The AEC, he complains, "discounts all legitimate criticism of its programs" and uses tax dollars to support an illegitimate propaganda campaign. "I call this situation to the attention of the Senate, not to beat the ghosts of past errors out because the issue is very much alive today", Gravel declared. "Cannikin is upon us and the selling job is all too familiar."

The report itself describes how the AEC's public relations effort for the Milrow test in 1969—the nuclear explosion that was designed as a proving shot for the five megaton Cannikin test—was planned in three stages. The first, preliminary stage started in December 1966, and gradually picked up momentum during the two and a half years to July 1969. The chief object of this phase of operations was to inform the public that the AEC was

conducting a feasibility study of Amchitka to explore the possibility of using the island for nuclear testing. "Throughout this period", the report points out, "policy did not permit confirming that a nuclear test would be detonated on Amchitka. Public statements were framed in such language as 'determining the feasibility of Amchitka for possible use in underground nuclear testing'". The policy, however, became less than credible when it had become widely known that the AEC had let a \$12 million drilling contract, but the public relations team nevertheless stuck to its original story.

From July 18, 1969, when the AEC finally let it be known that an explosion was planned to take place under Amchitka, to October 2, when the Milrow test took place, the report describes an intensive build up in its public relations effort. Until September 20, the chief effort of the AEC's propaganda was directed towards building up public support and good will. An office was set up in a hotel in Anchorage, films documenting the AEC's efforts to save sea otters were made and distributed, and thousands of publications outlining why the AEC tests weapons, how it ensures the safety of its testing, and other background information were distributed. The report also explains how it enlisted the support of a newspaper editor by associating him with the sea otter film and keeping in touch with him by letter and telephone, so that in the end he would accept and print AEC statements that the Alaskan public would not be endangered. The AEC also took space in two of the state's largest fairs and showed exhibits of archaeology on Amchitka and a pictorial history of the development of the site on Amchitka Island.

The report finally gives the details of a campaign conducted during the two weeks before the test took place and designed to offset public opposition in the press and on the radio and television. The most disturbing aspect of this phase in the activities, Gravel maintains, is the AEC's unwillingness to accept that its opponents were motivated by anything other than desire for publicity. For one thing, the report consistently terms the demonstrators in Canada as "hysterical", and castigates the press for giving extensive coverage to opponents of the AEC. Seemingly, anyone who wanted to get his name in the newspapers or on radio—regardless of expertise or qualifications—could do so by making a statement against the test, the AEC complains. The commission also resented its opponents bringing in seemingly irrelevant material, but nevertheless carried on distributing all kinds of information on other activities of the AEC to the state schools.