

ing and inserting the Senate-passed version attracted only four votes. But perhaps the strongest demonstration of support lies in the fact that no Republican member of the Commerce committee voted to substitute the version passed by the Senate, in spite of strong pressure from the White House. In fact, Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, took the trouble to write to every member of the committee urging them to support the Senate version.

Members of the House of Representatives will therefore be faced with a bill designed to give cancer research a greatly increased budget, and, like members of the Senate, they will not run the risk of seeming to vote against cancer research by opposing the bill. The chief challenge to the Rogers bill will therefore come from amendments designed to replace the bill with the Senate version. Mr Brock Adams, who voted against the Rogers bill in the Interstate and Foreign Commerce committee last week, is intending to introduce such an amendment from the floor of the House, and he will have the support of the White House lobbyists.

Even those who support Mr Adams's amendment, however, admit that it stands little chance of succeeding since the tide is now running so strongly in favour of keeping cancer research within the National Institutes of Health. Another reason why the amendment will not pack a very heavy punch is that the White House is in an embarrassing position over the two bills, and will find it difficult to lobby for the Senate version with any conviction. The problem is that the bill passed by the Senate is very similar to a bill introduced by Senator Edward M. Kennedy. The Administration opposed Kennedy's bill on the grounds that it might lead to the break up of the National Institutes of Health, but later came to a compromise which effectively put the Administration's name on Kennedy's proposals. The White House is therefore now urging Congress to turn down a bill whose objectives it once supported. The Administration has, however, been consistent in its wish to give public voice to its desire to aid cancer research—a great asset in election year.

SPACE

No Strings Attached

by our Washington Correspondent

ONE of the chief rocks on which European cooperation in space research has foundered in the past year or so has been removed by the US State Department. It was announced last week that NASA will launch European scientific

and technological satellites without assurance of European collaboration in the space shuttle programme, and the US government is also prepared in principle to launch telecommunications satellites for European countries.

The State Department's offer, which was outlined in a letter from Under-Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson to M. Theo Lefevre, chairman of the European Space Conference, may be sufficient to tempt European governments to abandon the Europa III launcher (which is designed to launch the type of satellites on which the US government has now given an assurance), thus freeing European finances for participation in the shuttle programme. The letter was sent in September, but was not made public until last week.

The new attitude of the US government marks a considerable shift in policy. For one thing, discussions of US launch policy have for the past year been underpinned—tacitly if not explicitly—by the assumption that provision of US launchers would be contingent on European cooperation in the space shuttle programme. The US government has also been chary in the past of giving assurances on the launching of telecommunications satellites that may in any way compete with Intelsat. That, at least, was one of the chief reasons advanced in Europe for pressing ahead with Europa III.

The US government is not, however, prepared to ignore Intelsat in the hope of promoting closer accord with Europe on space research, for the assurance on launcher provision is conditioned by several clauses designed on the face of things to protect Intelsat interests. Briefly, the United States will provide launch facilities for communications satellites approved by Intelsat, but blanket launch assurance cannot be given for satellites that are not supported by Intelsat.

According to the Intelsat agreement signed earlier this year, the consortium must give its advice on telecommunications satellites flown independently by member countries, the chief consideration being the extent to which the proposed satellite will compete commercially with those sponsored by Intelsat. The US government is now saying that it will launch European satellites that gain Intelsat approval, or which have been supported by the US within Intelsat. Since it is highly unlikely that satellites backed by European and United States interests would fail to gain Intelsat approval, the agreement boils down essentially to the question of US support. The agreement comes very close in practice, however, to being a complete assurance of the availability of US launchers for all types of satellites.

Whether or not such an assurance will

help to sew together the tattered fragments of space collaboration in Europe is open to question, but the announcement has at least laid the basis for future negotiations between the governments of Europe and the United States. Already, the State Department has suggested that discussions should not be confined to collaboration on the shuttle, but that they should be broadened to include all kinds of space research, and two weeks ago a NASA official was dispatched to Paris to tell the European Space Conference of NASA's plans for the next ten to fifteen years. If the launch assurance is sufficient to persuade European governments that Europa III is no longer needed, such discussions would have a much greater chance of success.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Lessons from Cannikin

from a Correspondent

WHAT the US Atomic Energy Commission scientists learnt from the Cannikin test on the Island of Amchitka will probably never be known, being apparently vital to national security. The lessons for all other participants in the affair are more obvious.

The drama associated with Cannikin was appropriate to a Moon shot. Environmentalists have fought during the past week a desperate court action to have papers on the environmental impact of the test released and then to use them in demonstrating that there were significant risks of earthquakes, tidal waves and radioactive leakage. On the very morning of the test, the Supreme Court sat to hear arguments on the environmental impact, and voted 4 to 3 that the test could proceed. Thereafter the AEC, clear of its last hurdle, went ahead and fired the shot which predictably triggered no earthquakes or tidal waves. It is too early to tell whether there will be any radioactive leakage, but there appears to be no concern about it.

One of the most remarkable and least noted features of this test is that in the fifties and early sixties the United States fired such shots in the atmosphere with impunity. The American public has come a long way in its attitudes since then. Unfortunately, the issues on which the AEC were challenged were in the opinion of many flimsy. It is of course an old political trick to steer clear of the central arguments and try to make the peripheral questions seem more important. The AEC did not even have consciously to pursue this policy; the environmental question was the only one which generated a significant amount of heat. To be sure, there is never a zero risk of environmental damage and no scien-