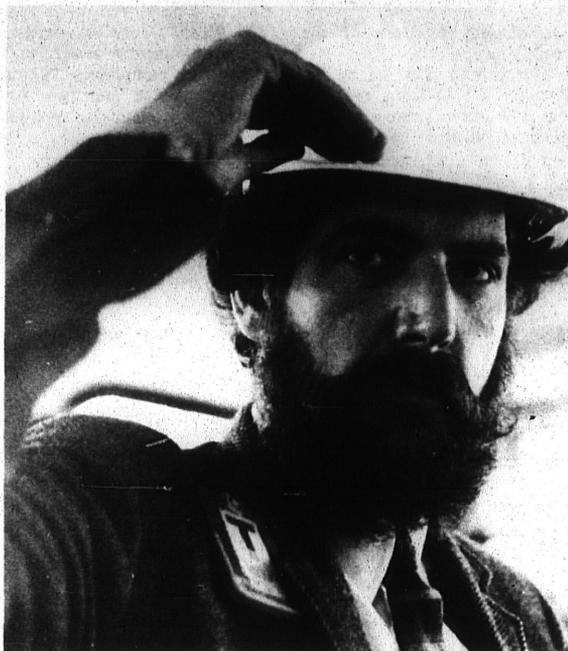


# AEC ON THE READY FOR CANNIKIN SHOT



**HARDHATTED CONSERVATIONIST**—Gordon Wright, representing the Alaska Conservation Society on the AEC junket to Amchitka, salutes *TUNDRA TIMES*. Wright, from Fairbanks, conducts the University-Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra. He said he was "unimpressed and unconvinced" by AEC arguments on the trip that Cannikin is a relatively safe nuclear project.

**AMCHITKA ISLAND**—Reporters and others were brought here on August 26 for a tour and briefing by the Atomic Energy Commission on the October underground nuclear blast called Project Cannikin. Cannikin is to be a 5-Megaton (equivalent to 5 million tons of TNT) explosion, detonated more than one mile below the surface of Amchitka Island.

Nearly seventy, including AEC personnel, took the trip, departing Anchorage at 7 a.m. in a chartered Lockheed Electra from Reeve Aleutian Airways. Several AFN representatives, staffers from the offices of the Alaska congressional delegation conservationists, representatives of Alaskan industry and labor, and government officials (including several state legislators) joined reporters from national and state media and press for the journey, along with a man who might well stop the blast through legal action: Ilidor Philemonof (see related story, page 1) of the Aleut League.

Participants on the tour were first fed lunch at the AEC's cafeteria on the island after the four-hour flight from Anchorage, and then were bussed to the site of the Cannikin blast. The site looks a bit like an oil field, with a large derrick and sits roughly halfway between the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean on this treeless, desolate island.

Members of the tour were shown accompanying cable and monitoring equipment, and then taken to the sites of the previous Amchitka nuclear blasts, projects Longshot and Milrow. Scientists explained at Longshot how some leaked radioactivity had been measured in nearby ponds several months after the blast, but noted that none had been yet detected from the 1-megaton Milrow blast set off nearly two years ago as a "calibration test" or safety check for larger tests.

The building that housed project Milrow at ground zero still stands. One AEC official, when asked why the amazingly-intact structure has not been torn down, replied to a reporter, "to show to people like you," apparently implying that the building stands as testimony to the relative safety of underground testing. Later, scientists admitted that they had really expected the Milrow building to be destroyed.

At the short press conference, AEC staff and scientists explained that Cannikin is principally a weapons test for the test for the Spartan missile, to find out "whether or not the explosive works and how well," in the words of Philip Coyle, the test group director. The AEC "cannot comment" on reports that the Office of Science and Technology had recommended that President Nixon not sign the final order authorizing the blast, although the AEC's Henry Vermillion did note that "we do not now intend any tests larger than Cannikin for Amchitka."

In response to technical questions from the *TUNDRA TIMES*, Dr. Mel Merritt insisted that a recent *SCIENCE* magazine article by MIT professors did not change his opinion that a Cannikin-caused large earthquake is unlikely, beyond the estimated 7.0 Richter magnitude of the blast itself (see related story, page 1).

Estimates are that the one day junket cost the government more than \$30,000.

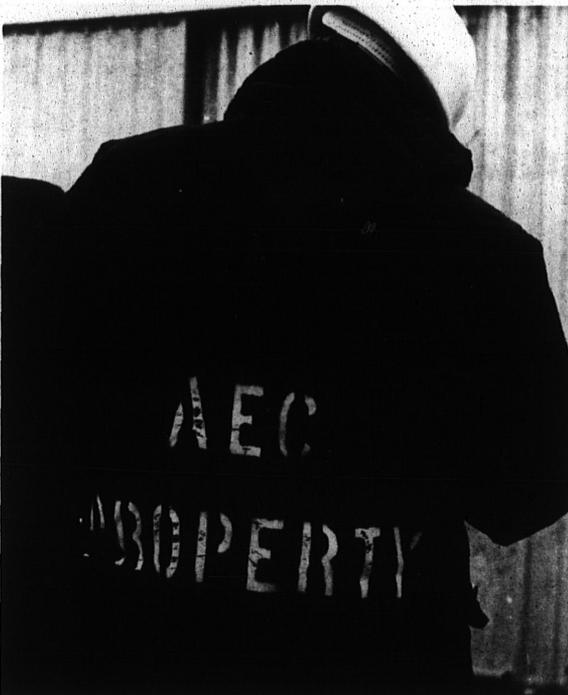


**MILES OF CABLES FOR ONE BOMB**—This is the cable room on Amchitka where the cables and wiring for monitoring, controlling and detonating the Cannikin blast will be reeled out as the bomb is lowered to more than a mile below the ground surface.



**AEC FIELDS QUESTIONS**—At a press conference at Amchitka after the island tour, AEC staff answer questions from reporters. From left to right: Dixon Steward, AEC, Anchorage (sitting); Dr. Mel Merritt, of AEC and Sandia Corporation, effects geophysicist; Henry Vermillion, Public Relations Officer for the AEC; Dr. Philip Coyle, of the University of California and the AEC, test group director; and Robert Thalgot, AEC, Cannikin test manager.

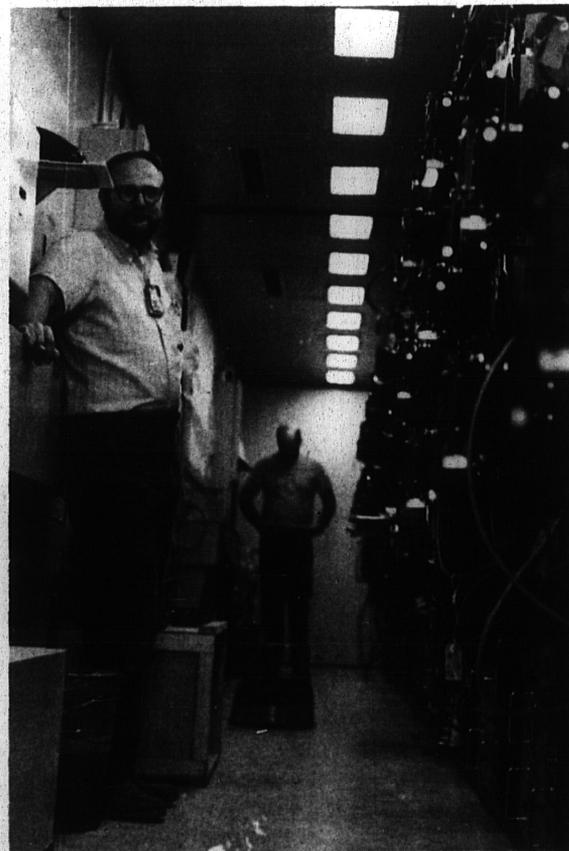
—Photos by FRED BROWN



**IN HIS GOVERNMENT'S SERVICE**—An AEC official pauses during the August 26 Amchitka junket to light his pipe, before proceeding on with reporters and invited V.I.P.'s in the tour of the island.



**STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND NATIONAL TV REPORTER**—On the AEC-chartered Reeve Aleutian Airways Electra, State Representative John Hoken (R.-Fairbanks) discusses the Cannikin nuclear blast with CBS Television News reporter Terry Drinkwater, just before the landing at Amchitka.



**TOP SECRET**—Reporters saw this monitoring equipment inside a trailer after being told: "We're in a secured area, with all these trailers, and we'd like to show you part of it, which is difficult. So we've declassified one trailer so you can see this."