

Senator Harris Changes Stand-

Asks Amendment to Mammal Bill Excluding Natives

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Fred R. Harris (D-Okla) announced last week his intention to amend the Senate Ocean Mammal Protection Bill to exclude the Indian, Aleut, and Eskimo Natives from its provisions if the version approved by the Senate Commerce Committee is not satisfactory to Alaskan Natives.

The Ocean Mammal Bill, which would make illegal the

slaughter of seals, porpoises, sea otters, polar bears, and other mammals, should be amended, Harris said, to allow Indian, Aleut, and Eskimo Natives to continue hunting these animals for subsistence purposes.

Under the Harris Amendment, native hunting would be allowed as long as the general level of killings remains the same on a per capita basis as in the last decade.

Speaking on behalf of the new amendment, Harris cited the target of the protection bill as "the commercial firm which butchers tens of thousands (of sea mammals) for private profit", not the Alaskan Native who kills only about 2,500 mammals per year. Harris said we should protect the interests of the Natives as well as those of the mammals.

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On another point, Harris stated that if the current legislation also ends the taking of seals on the Pribilofs, then the Aleuts who make their living from this activity must be compensated for their loss in earnings.

To accomplish this, Harris stated his support of an amendment similar to one introduced by Senator Gravel of Alaska which would compensate the Natives by up to 100% of their losses.

"For years this country has paid wealthy farmers and the giant agribusinesses millions of dollars not to grow crops," Harris noted, "We certainly can

spend a vastly smaller sum on the Aleuts to make up for their willingness to end the slaughter of a national resource."

"But we must not only compensate the Aleuts," Harris continued, "we must also provide them with other native employment."

To accomplish this, Harris stated that he was prepared to introduce another amendment to direct appropriate executive departments to find alternate routes of employment for the Aleut peoples on the Pribilof Islands, and to report back to the Congress within 12 months on action taken.