

Amendment May Confiscate Violating Foreign Vessels

The discovery last Thursday of a Russian vessel fishing in Alaskan waters—the third such incident this year—prompted Senator Gruening (D-Alaska) to introduce for himself and Senator E. L. (Bob) Bartlett (D-Alaska) an amendment to existing law which will provide for mandatory confiscation of any foreign vessel caught for the second time fishing in Alaskan waters.

Denouncing the violation as "an outrage," Senator Gruening attributed "a considerable part of the responsibility" to the State Department, "which has repeatedly injected itself into the judicial proceedings by sending word to the Department of Justice that it wanted a very moderate application of the penalties which the law provides."

Legislation introduced by Senator Bartlett during the 88th Congress and enacted as Public Law 88-308 prescribed penalties for any non-American violating its provisions by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year, or both, not merely

upon the captain but upon every member of the crew, as well as confiscation of the vessel and catch.

Despite strong objections raised by Senators Bartlett and Gruening, the trawler seized on March 2 was fined only \$5,000 and the one seized on March 22 was fined \$10,000. "In one instance," Senator Gruening told his Senate colleagues, "it was reported that there were some \$60,000 worth of fisheries in the vessel's hold. Consequently, it was a most profitable deal for the Russian poacher."

The Coast Guard informed Senator Gruening that the vessel caught on Thursday was the same as that apprehended on March 22. "It is now crystal clear," he said, "that unless a penalty is imposed sufficient to discourage similar violations, these will continue."

Urging the prompt enactment of his amendment, Senator Gruening said, "We have a duty to protect our fisheries and our fishermen against these brazen actions of Soviet skippers."