

Five Nations To Meet at U-A On Preservation of Polar Bear

Washington, July 8 — Senator E. L. Bartlett, in a joint announcement with Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall, today said that a five-nation scientific conference on polar bears will be held at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Sept. 6-11.

Invitations have been sent to Canada, Denmark, Norway and the Soviet Union. In addition, certain private organizations will be invited to send observers.

Senator Bartlett, who has taken the lead in awakening public interest in the preservation of the polar bear, issued the first call for such a conference in February. At the time he noted that accurate figures on the polar bear population were not available. In a speech to the Senate in April, Bartlett said that he suggested a fact-finding conference because he was "determined to see that the polar bear does not follow the buffalo into extinction."

Secretary Udall has placed the animal on the list of species threatened with extinction. While reports on the status of the polar bear population are not definitive, he said, "It is time the scientists got together to determine how much fact and fancy there are in the re-

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ports."

Bartlett explained that the purpose of the convention would be to pool and distribute information. He expressed the hope that an international program of research on the polar bear would result from the meeting.

Senator Bartlett observed that it was difficult to study polar bears because they lived, for the most part, beyond the territorial limits of circumpolar nations.

"They do not legally belong to any country, and thus no country has gone to much trouble to find out about them," he pointed out. "Scientists do not even know if there is one population of bears moving from nation to nation on the ice pack, or if there are two or more groups of polar bears."

Estimates of the number of bears run from 5,000 to 19,000.

"I am particularly pleased that the conference will be held in Fairbanks," Bartlett said. "The University of Alaska, which is known internationally for its arctic studies program, will be able to provide excellent facilities for such a meeting. More important, our state, which borders the habitat of polar bears, has a strong interest in the preservation of the animal. The State has laws limiting the hunting season and the number of dead bears a hunter can bring into Alaska," he continued. "Also, the State Senate passed a resolution endorsing my request for this international conference."

Secretary Udall said that it was "particularly fitting that the conference take place during the International Cooperation Year. It is in such forums that experts from many lands can discuss conservation problems of mutual concern and establish the foundations for the future actions which can benefit all men."