WAINWRIGHT — (left to right) Billy Nashoalook, David Bodfish, and Jim Allen Aveoganna from Wainwright.

Restrictions?—

Native Made Articles Concern Hunters

Expressing deep concern over prospective regulations to limit items that may be sold by Native craftsmen, several Inupiat Eskimo community leaders from Wainwright were in Anchorage last week.

Mayor David Bodfish, Jim Allen Aveoganna, and Billy Nashoalook visited RurAL CAP, and together with Executive Director Mike Harper, talked with Senator Stevens, seeking his assistance.

On June 3, 1974 a list of Native arts and crafts items was published in the Federal Register as a law proposed by the Federal department of National Marine Fisheries which would restrict the selling of Native made articles to those on the list.

Aveoganna explained that for many years the only people in the villages who had income not from hunting or trapping were the schoolteacher and the storekeeper.

He said, "My father raised us without working for wages. He was an excellent hunter of polar bear, seal, walrus, whales and ducks. He fished for whitefish and grayling. Many of our coastal people to this day are striving to maintain our subsistence ways."

The Wainwright men told Senator Stevens that they understood the polar bear skins or even sealskins could not be sold as a whole unit, but that the animal skins must be cut or altered in order to be sold.

Bodfish reported, "For many households, the only income received is through the sale of these skins and this has been significantly reduced because of the interpretation of these laws. We don't want welfare, we would rather try to make a living as we did previously."

Nashoalook said that in the winter, about 98 per cent of the men are unemployed.

Harper commented he believed that if the list became part of the Marine Mammal Regulations, the effect would be economically and culturally damaging as the very existence of many artists and craftsmen would be threatened.

MIKE HARPER speaks and illustrates to the hunters from Wainwright.