

Pribilof Islands Bill Progresses

The Senate Commerce Committee this week approved with amendments Senator Bartlett's bill (S. 2102) to bring wide-ranging changes in the administration of the Pribilof Islands.

The bill is in three major parts. One restates and expands present law relating to the protection of the North Pacific fur seal, one repeals the 1944 Fur Seal Act, and the third makes changes in the administration of the Islands.

The 1944 Fur Seal Act, which would be repealed, protects the sea otter outside the three-mile limit from taking by United States nationals. One of the committee amendments would continue such sea otter protection.

The bill as introduced provided that the Interior Secretary could enter into agreement with the State of Alaska

for operation by the State of educational facilities in the Pribilofs. The committee amended the bill to transfer such jurisdiction to the State.

Other provisions of the bill would turn over medical and dental care on the Islands to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; would allow some 143 residents who worked in the fur seal industry before 1950 to receive Civil Service retirement credit, such benefits now applying only to service performed since 1950; and would establish a townsite on St. Paul Island with provision made for transfer of title to lands, houses and property.

A committee amendment would permit use of land outside the townsite for recreational, business and other purposes subject to approval by the Secretary of the Interior.