

Committee Gives Nod to Pribilof Bill

House subcommittee approval was given last week to Senator Bartlett's senate-passed bill S. 2102 making changes in the administration of the Pribilof Islands.

The measure is expected to be considered by the full House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee next week at the same time as two other measures sponsored by Senator Bartlett, S. 2218 providing a 12-mile fishery zone off the coasts of the United States and S. 2720 authorizing demonstration plant construction for the production of fish protein concentrate.

The Pribilof bill was amended by the House subcommittee. As passed the Senate, the bill authorized the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the State of Alaska whereby the State would assume the cost of the education of the Pribilof children.

The subcommittee adopted the Interior Department's recommendation that the cost of the program come from fur seal sale receipts.

In addition, the House subcommittee disagreed with the language of the Senate report that the costs of medical and dental care on the Islands should come from the regular appropriation to the Surgeon General for Indian health.

The subcommittee adopted the Interior Department recommendation that this cost, too, should come from the receipts of the fur seal sales.

One provision of the bill as it passed the Senate would allow the Secretary of the Interior to establish a townsite on St. Paul which would enable the purchase of lots, by individual natives.

The Senate placed a 10-year limit on the issuance of restrictive deeds for such property. The House subcommittee again adopted an Interior Department proposal providing that the property could not be disposed of by an individual native unless approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

"While it is generally desirable not to provide against alienation," the Interior Department report stated, "we believe it is important to the well-being of the natives and to the protection of this special government reservation to prevent alienation unless approved by the Secretary."

"It may be that some time in the future the native will have sufficient experience as land owners to enable them to exercise this power of alienation in a reasonable manner. We cannot say today, however, that within 10 years the natives will have gained this experience."

Other provisions of the Senate-passed bill were approved with a few technical amendments. Those provisions include extension of Civil Service retirement benefits for pre-1950 service to all those now employed by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to those who have already retired when the bill becomes law and to the survivors of any deceased workers who have pre-1950 service.

The cost of the benefits would come from receipts of fur seal sales.

The measure also provides transitional grants to the municipal government of St. Paul when it is organized authorizing \$50,000 the first year with grants reduced by \$10,000 annually over the next four years. These funds would also come from receipts of the sale of fur seals.

Another provision of the bill gives authority to the Secretary of the Interior to lease or contract to any public or private group the use of federal property for various public or private group the use of federal property for various public and commercial purposes outside the townsite of St. Paul. A final major provision would protect the otter on the high seas.