

WHALE Committee Sends Open Letter

May 10, 1972

OPEN LETTER TO ALL CONCERNED

RE: Sea Mammals Legislation

As you know, hearings on the Sea Mammals Legislation will be held in Alaska May 11 and 12 in order that voices of Alaskans will be heard on these bills affecting Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts. What impact these hearings will have on a National level, and at the Washington, D. C., scene, is yet to be seen.

A bill that would prohibit the use of ocean mammals was passed in the U. S. House of Representatives in March by a vote of 362-10. A similar measure that would allow subsistence use of certain species and for continuance of the Native crafts industries for local marketing only is now pending in the Senate's Commerce Committee.

The Senate Commerce Committee held an Executive Session on Sea Mammals Legislation on May 8. Then, on May 22, the Full Commerce Committee will meet for final deliberations on the legislation, in hopes to vote on the bill in late May or early June. Shortly thereafter, Free Conference Committee will meet and Congress hopes to have this legislation become law before recess in

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late June or early July.

The well-financed, highly-organized conservation and environmental groups throughout the Nation have been carrying out, for several months now, an extensive campaign to ban ocean mammal hunting, including important and needed uses of by-products of the animals; therefore, once again, affecting adversely the traditional way of life and the culture of the First Americans. Though these organizations may have well meaning, they have failed to take into consideration the basic needs of our culture and have not sought advice on these bills from the first and natural conservationists — the Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts of Alaska.

No doubt, there is agreement that the present economy of the Native people is sparse, as compared to the rest of the Nation; thus making it hard to do effective lobbying activities which relate to