

# Interior, State Departments Favor Bartlett's Call for Polar Bear Talks

Senator Bartlett's representations to the State and Interior Departments on the need for an international technical meeting of several nations on polar bear has received backing from the two federal agencies.

"We agree wholeheartedly," Assistant Secretary of the Interior Briggs informed Senator Bartlett, "with your suggestion that an international technical meeting be called with representatives of the Soviet Union, Norway, Denmark, Canada and the United States participating, to review available scientific information on the status of polar bear populations and thus provide a basis for intelligent decisions regarding future action."

Senator Bartlett over the years has become increasingly concerned over the lack of knowledge regarding the population of the polar bear and has stated that no one knows for sure whether the bears are decreasing, increasing or remaining fairly constant.

The subject was discussed informally with Russian Deputy Fisheries Minister M. N. Sukhoruchenko when

he was in Washington recently during king crab meetings between the United States and Soviet Union officials.

The State Department advised Senator Bartlett, "Consideration is being given at this time to convening a working group of technical experts on polar bears, on the lines you suggest, to consider known facts about polar bears whether any international action may be in order. It is anticipated that such a meeting would include representatives from all concerned nations."

Interior Department officials expect to be in further contact with Soviet officials shortly to raise the subject with officials in Canada, Norway and Denmark.