

Nunivak Musk Ox Wool

Under Consideration

The Department of the Interior will undertake the possibility of developing a musk ox wool industry on the Island of Nunivak for the benefit of the residents there.

The plan was revealed to Sen. Ernest Gruening recently. Gruening had looked into the matter as a result of a testimony of George King of Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island at native land claims hearings in Anchorage on February 8-9-10, 1968.

During the hearings, George King brought to the attention of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee that although the people of Nunivak Island believe they could make good use of the wool of the musk oxen, they were not allowed to harvest the resource or use it for their benefit.

As part of his testimony, King said in part:

"...That wool is very valuable and would bring

approximately \$150 from each animal. It is not being picked by anyone at the present time and it would provide an economy for our people..."

Sen. Gruening wrote to the Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and the response came from the Assistant Interior Secretary for Fish and Wildlife Clarence F. Pautzke.

"Although it seems that the shed wool could be the basis for a modest native industry at Mekoryuk," Pautzke said, "there is some question as to the commercial utility of wool or qiviut gathered from the tundra.

"It is apparent that the residents of Mekoryuk should have technical guidance aimed at full local processing in the community. We will explore such a program through the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

Gruening said that it was his intention to follow up and continue to urge the Department of the Interior "to follow the plan now suggested and give the people of Nunivak Island an opportunity to engage in a remunerative business."