

Editorial Comment—

We Commend Gravel

Senator Mike Gravel is to be commended for his plans to strongly oppose sea mammal legislation in Congress and as it came out of the U.S. House recently.

The House version of the sea mammal bill, if not changed, would wreak havoc among the coastal Eskimos and Aleuts on Aleutian Chain and Pribilof Islands. If the House version of the bill is followed, the Eskimos will not be allowed to use the skins of seals, oogrucks, bowhead whale baleen, bowhead whale bone and walrus tusks for traditional arts and crafts of the Native people.

The Pribilof Island Aleuts would be deprived of their jobs as fur seal harvest workers. If this is imposed, it would be the end of a lifestyle as known on the islands today. It would also make serious inroads, if not fatal ones, on the lifestyles as known on St. Lawrence Island, Little Diomedede Island, Wales, Point Hope, Kivalina, Barrow and other localities. The bill as it stands now is a real threat to the way of life of a great many Alaskan Natives. Something has to be done either to make it acceptable to Natives or kill it.

Last Friday in Washington, D.C., Senator Gravel told the press that he was "prepared to take some very extreme steps" and that he might even filibuster against the sea mammal bill awaiting action on the Senate floor, if it does not provide for the interests of Alaskans.

Mike Gravel is showing a courageous attitude against a bill that could be passed without getting full knowledge of the situation of the Alaskan Natives in relation to their lives enhanced by the presence of numerous mammals they have always sorely needed. We hope that Senator Gravel will be heeded by his colleagues in the Senate so so that meaningful amendments to the bill can be made.

We commend Mike Gravel for his courageous intentions.