

# VIEWPOINT

## The taxpayers' seal hunt

From:

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Many taxpayers would be outraged if they knew that some of their money is being used to subsidize the killing of seals.

Under an international treaty approved in 1911, the United States has paid native Aleuts to carry out an annual slaughter of adult male seals on the Pribilof Islands off Alaska. The islanders even get federal pension credits for clubbing, stabbing and skinning the animals (one year of credit for each five-week hunt).

The administration would like to get out of the seal-skinning business because (1) there is heavy opposition from animal welfare groups and (2) the market has declined, so pelts have been piling up in warehouses.

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The government tried last year to get the islanders to take over the operation as a private commercial venture, but they declined. Instead, a contract was negotiated under which the government paid the islanders \$500,000 cash and threw in some 30,000 skins left unsold.

The summer hunt season is drawing near again, but the Reagan administration is against spending for that purpose. In addition, 44 senators have written the State Department saying they "cannot justify the expenditure of taxpayer money for the killing of seals."

We hope the opponents prevail.

### *Village Advertiser Commentary:*

When it comes to reducing the deficit, eliminating subsidies to kill seals is but one place to save. This program is only one of many of the same ilk. A billion here... a billion there... that's how the budget grew. And that's how it must be pared.