

PRIBILOF'S ST. GEORGE

St. George Island People Fighting to Keep Community

People of St. George, on the Pribilof Islands, are still fighting to keep their community alive.

And according to reports received by the Tundra Times this week, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries officials are still trying to pressure St. George people into moving to St. Paul, a larger community on the southern large island in the Pribilofs.

The BCF, having jurisdiction over the islands and the fur seal rookery there, maintains its headquarters at the larger community. The agency would like to consolidate the people of the two villages in one place, and have used economic pressure and other means in the past to get St. George people to move to St. Paul against their wishes.

Recently Alexie Merculief, St. George man and a clerk in the BCF commissary at St. George, visited the larger community.

Officials escorted him around St. Paul, showing him a nice house where he could bring his family to live and praising the benefits of life at St. Paul—including being near an airfield, a doctor, or medical facilities.

He was also promised a pay raise if he moved to St. Paul.

He would work at the same job—a commissary clerk—but would receive more pay.

At last report, Merculief is "still thinking" about moving his family of nine to the larger community. His wife

is reportedly against the idea.

Airstrip Needed

The 200-year-old St. George community, first founded by early Russian fur-hunters and now with a population of roughly 225, is without an airstrip or a post office.

Mail to the fog-shrouded island is air-dropped from a Coast Guard plane servicing the military station at St. Paul. Heavier mail, parcel post packages, are brought whenever the U.S. Fish and Wildlife ship "Pribilof" makes a trip to the island.

Efforts to get the island a rough landing field are just getting underway, pushed by the local people themselves.

Rep. Carl Moses, (R-Unalaska), the Aleutian area state representative, is giving the idea strong backing.

Two VISTA volunteers recently sent to the island community, Bill Streight and Doug Daige, are also helping with the airstrip promotion.

Shakeup

The push for self-improvement by the St. George people is matched by what appears to be a shakeup in the BCF island administration.

Howard Enough (ee-no), past manager of the islands, has been moved from his station at St. Paul to Seattle, according to reports.

A Bureau spokesman termed his transfer a "promotion," and that from Seattle he will be moved even higher, to a Washington post.

Cause

One possible cause of the transfer was that higher Bureau officials were apparently unhappy with Enough's "socializing" with villagers at St. Paul, according to reports.

By becoming too popular with the local people, they evidently felt he was losing his effectiveness as an administrator.

Another change was with John Wolfe, former unofficial "liaison" man between the island administration and the island people.

Wolfe is going to Washington for five months of training for another assignment, according to the Bureau.

According to reports here, the State Human Rights Commission had quietly requested Wolfe's replacement after a recent visit to the Pribilofs investigating conditions there.

Baltzo Moves

The most significant development, however, is that C. Howard Baltzo, Pribilof Program Director in Seattle, will be taking the reins himself at the island.

Baltzo will be wintering at St. Paul, according to reports. This will mark the first time a high BCF official has spent more than a few months on the islands.



FOG-SHROUDED—The Pribilofs seem perpetually shrouded by clouds—rain and wet fog that probably make it one of the most comfortable summer homes for the fur seals.

—Tundra Times Photo



TWO VOLUNTEERS—Two new VISTA volunteers at St. George Island, Bill Streight and Doug Daige, stand beside one of the big Aleut native boats. Handmade, these huge craft can carry many men on seal hunting or fishing expeditions.

—Tundra Times Photo