

# Pribilofs Ready for Self-Government, Says U of A Report

The Pribilof Islands community of St. Paul is ready to become a successful self-governing municipality, according to a report published by the University of Alaska's Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research.

Entitled "St. Paul Community Study—An Economic and Social Analysis," the 176-page report is the result of investigation and study of the economic and social base of the government-administered village.

The study was undertaken for the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in accordance with the Fur Seal Act of 1966. The act, sponsored by Sen. E. L. Bartlett, provides for St. Paul to obtain self-government if the Secretary of the Interior determines that a viable community "capable of providing adequate municipal services is established."

The legislation also allows for the transfer of government owned land, property and facilities to St. Paul and for transitional grants to assist the community in providing municipal services.

Following an examination of the community's ability to support municipal government and services, the report concludes that the necessary basis exists for the federal government to take the steps leading to the establishment of self-government in St. Paul.

Successful establishment of an incorporated community will help move St. Paul toward a higher level of per capita income and an improved standard of living," the report states.

The Pribilof Islands came under the direct jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Interior in 1910. In recent years, management of the islands' affairs has been vested in the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The government's prime objective is the conservation, management and protection of fur seals," the report explains. "In addition, government responsibility has included providing for the health of the two Pribilof Islands communities—St. Paul and St. George."

The report states that in the past the residents of the island communities received free housing, clothing, food, household supplies, health care, education and other services. These were supplemented by a limited but gradually increasing cash wage.

Since 1962, all workers have received standard

(Continued on page 5)

# Pribilofs Ready . . .

(continued from page 3)

government wages in accordance with the type of work they perform and the period for which they are employed.

The report describes St. Paul as having "all the external manifestations of the typical company town. It has an orderly layout and relatively excellent physical facilities. Employment is available to all residents, either on a permanent or seasonal basis."

However, the report concludes that the price of these benefits has been limited mobility, restricted political power, a requirement for a cash wage to sustain existing living standards, and dependence on a single industry—fur sealing—over which the people have no control.

Some changes have occurred in recent years, according to the report. The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries now places greater emphasis on economic operation of the

sealing industry and is attempting to phase out its community and welfare responsibilities.

At the same time, the people of St. Paul have assumed some of the transferred proprietary functions and their leaders have worked for a greater degree of self-government with support from state and federal officials.

"This report is one of the most detailed analyses of an Alaskan community ever made," said Victor Fischer, director of the institute.

Fischer, along with Dr. Don C. Foote, a geographer at McGill University in Montreal who will join the institute later this year, and Dr. George W. Rogers, senior economist with the institute, wrote the report.

Copies are available from the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, University of Alaska, at 5¢ each.