

BCF PLANS ST. GEORGE FIELD

Plan Calls for Starting Airstrip This Year and Completed Next Year

The remote village of St. George located on small St. George Island deep in the Bering Sea, is now slated to have an airstrip at last.

Congressman Howard W. Pollock's Washington office notified Flore Lekanof in Anchorage this week that an airstrip on St. George will be built. The construction of the strip will be done by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

"It means that the Pribilof Commission did not work in vain," said Flore Lekanof. "We are now seeing the result of that commission."

The Pribilof Commission was composed of Hugh J. Wade, Secretary of State under Gov. William A. Egan's administration, chairman; Willard Bowman,

representing the State Commission for Human Rights; Roy Peratrovich, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Juneau office; James C. Rettie, Office of the Secretary of Interior, representing the government; and Howard Rock, editor of Tundra Times, representing the public.

The commission in its final report in 1965, had recommended that an airstrip be built on St. George Island.

The commission appointed by the then Gov. William Egan, had investigated conditions on St. Paul Island and St. George after Tundra Times made strong allegations that human rights of

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the Pribilovians had been violated.

The people of St. George, about 225 in all, had made charges against the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries that administer the islands, that they were being forced to move off the island by the BCF.

"The fact that the project is going to begin on the airstrip on St. George means that the St. George people will not be moving for some time to come," said Lekanof. "This will also mean that eventually, the people will realize a post office on the island."

Lekanof said that surveyors were on St. George on July 11-15. He said the next group will be engineers and that they will prepare fill-in material for the airstrip this year.

"Word was that it might not be completed this year and that it will be completed next year," said Lekanof.

He said that BCF intends to base a small aircraft on St. Paul Island 40 miles from St. George "for the time being."

"The communities, someday, would like to serve their own by having their own plane and pilots," Lekanof said.

He said there was a young Aleut man in Anchorage who is contemplating to train to fly.

"Those people on St. George have been waiting so long for an airstrip that they are going to work hard to have it completed," he said.

Early this year, Flore Lekanof had said, "St. George is the worst served native community in Alaska."

At the present time, the only contact St. George people have is when a ship calls three times a year and an occasional mail drop by plane.

Being one of the Pribilof Islands, St. George Island people harvest about one fifth of the fur seal industry's annual production.