

PRIBILOF RECOMMENDATIONS NOT FOLLOWED, SAYS WRITER

P.O. Box 264
Bethel, Alaska 99559
March 15, 1966

Mr. Howard Rock
Tundra Times
P.O. Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Howard:

As you know, last week I attended along with yourself and others, the Alaska Native Housing Committee meeting in Juneau. Long before I became President of the Kuskokwim Valley Native Association, I had been actively interested in the many problems which beset our Indian, Eskimo and Aleut people.

I have followed the controversial issue surrounding the Pribilof Islands in the TUNDRA TIMES for the past year or more, with a great deal of concern. Some weeks ago, I sent for and received a copy of the report by Governor Egan's Special Commission which was sent to the Pribilofs to study the economic conditions there.

While I don't agree with everything in the report, or every recommendation made by the Commission, I have no basis for this disagreement other than my natural suspicion. While I do have these suspicions, I, along with other Native leaders, had adopted a "wait and see" policy and have accepted the thought that the Commission, of which you were a member, acted in good faith, and that the conclusions reached were just and right.

Tuesday, after the Housing Committee adjourned in Juneau, I was invited to attend a luncheon. Guest speaker at the luncheon was Mr. John Wolfe, Community Services Officer for St. Paul and St. George Islands. Because of my aforementioned concern in the Pribilofs, I was quite interested in what Mr. Wolfe would have to say. According to his speech, the average employee of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries on the Pribilof Islands can expect to make from \$4,200 to \$8,000 a year. He can leave anytime he may choose, and best of all, he can return to the Islands whenever he tires of the outside world. Statistics by the speaker included the eventual take-over of all the facilities by the Aleut people; however, Mr. Wolfe failed to say when this would be accomplished, or if the program is actually in progress.

After studying the report by the Commission and a report of the State Human Rights Commission, I was quite surprised by the glowing and favorable light with which Mr. Wolfe surrounded the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. The Commission reported there were many problems still existing, and made various recommendations which they felt would correct these problems. Anyone reading the report and then listening to Mr. Wolfe, would be hard-pressed to believe both were reporting living conditions on the same islands. I have no bone to pick with Mr. Wolfe, as I suppose he is doing the job as he is instructed. However, for the sake of the record, I would like to say that I think it is quite appropriate for the Bureau to spend these public funds having Mr. Wolfe travel around the State appearing before the public and speaking at luncheons informing the people of Alaska of the utopian conditions under which the Pribilovians live, and of the many blessings bestowed upon them by the benevolent Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

I would like to say also that one of the recommendations made by the Commission was: "The Commission recommends that the Governor of Alaska or an appropriate agency of the State which he might designate, assign a trained and competent person to occupy the role of community counselor for St. Paul and St. George." (Page 12, Commission report.) If this is the capacity in which Mr. Wolfe is serving, then it appears that he has since become a public relations officer for the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries rather than working for the community, which obviously leaves the position of community counselor vacant.

At this point I would urge the Governor to consider appointed to this vacant position someone who would be a State employee answerable to the Governor or to a State Department. The Commission recognized the dangers inherent in a Bureau of Commercial Fisheries employee being given this responsibility, and wisely looked to the State to fill this position. I say again it is high time this is done.

Sincerely yours,

Fred A. Notti, President
Kuskokwim Valley Native
Association