

FAA discrimination case hearing is likely soon

A class action complaint filed on behalf of current and former Alaska Native employees of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will be considered next month by a hearing officer for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), if the affected parties agree to the dates suggested by the EEOC hearing officer.

Frank Peratrovich vs. FAA, a class action complaint, was filed in June of 1979 on behalf of Alaska Native citizens, with Peratrovich being identified as

the class agent for the group.

The complaint alleges that Peratrovich, a former FAA employee, and Frank Pagano, a current employee of the agency, and other Alaska Natives were systematically discriminated against in employment actions of the FAA, including being passed over for promotional opportunities and denied transfers and training and other equal employment opportunities because they are Alaska Natives.

Peratrovich brought the action after he and Pagano both
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sought the agency's top civil rights officer post in Alaska and were denied the job in favor of a non-Native employee who allegedly lacked experience in handling civil rights actions. This, and other alleged discriminatory actions, were discussed in a series of articles appearing in the Tundra Times from September through November of 1979.

The complaint came under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in February, after receiving a request from Senator Ted Stevens that the Commission handle the complaint, and after EEOC received consent from the parties involved for having the Commission assume

jurisdiction.

Peratrovich and other Natives involved in the action were granted assistance in preparation of the case when, in April, the Alaska Federation of Natives Litigation Committee appropriated \$5,000 toward defraying legal costs of the complaint. "We are extremely grateful for their rather bold move," Peratrovich said.

In an interview with the Tundra Times this week, the class agent expressed concern about a notice circulated recently by the FAA among Native employees and regional corporations about the action. "It said that if you (individual Natives) wish to opt out (of the action), all you would have to do is see us

(FAA). But they didn't tell them that they would lose their right to participate in any settlement relief granted us if they did opt out," Peratrovich said.

Peratrovich and his attorney, Mark Grover of Anchorage, are currently in the process of gathering affidavits and depositions from other Alaska Natives who allegedly suffered from discriminatory practices. Between 20 and 30 such individuals have been identified, according to Peratrovich.

Peratrovich and his attorney this week placed advertising in

the Tundra Times and other Alaskan newspapers inviting all Alaska Native individuals who have reason to believe they may be affected by the action to attend a meeting on June 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the Pioneer School House at Third and Eagle Streets in Anchorage. Those unable to attend may contact the attorney, Mark Grover, at 805 West Third Street, in Anchorage, phone 276-2777, for information about the action, according to Peratrovich.

Peratrovich expressed confidence that information being de-

veloped in preparation for hearings will provide for a strong presentation before the Commission.

"The beauty of this case is, if we prevail, other agencies in Alaska will stand up and take notice and be a little more receptive in employing Alaska Natives. It is kind of exciting," Peratrovich said.

Both parties in the action have been notified that the hearing officer from the Commission will be available to convene a hearing in Alaska beginning July 7.