

Authority Relates History of Pribilofs

PRIBILOVIAN, THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE OF ALASKA

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(Continued from Last Week)

Servitude Still Exists on the Pribilofs

The 1949 "Pribilof Report" mentioned on p. 7, reads in part: "The group can find absolutely no basis for the charge that the native Aleuts on the Pribilof Islands are held in 'slavery,' 'bondage,' or 'peonage'" (November 1949 Alaska Native Brotherhood Convention called this a "whitewash").

Here are a few illustrative facts of the state of servitude of the Pribilovians in 1965: 1. Pribilovians are forced to pay for fuel, and to lease their homes, while they are paid according to the Kodiak Naval Base wage scale for board workers, in other words those workers on Kodiak do not pay neither for fuel nor housing while Pribilovians are forced to pay.

2. In Tundra Times Dec. 21, 1964 in interview with Mr. Baltzo we read: "We pay welfare ourselves rather than have the State pay the cost of investigation way out here." How considerate! But, who authorized the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to take over functions of Federal or Alaska State Department of Welfare? Here is how this, so called welfare works: A man, 62 years of age, who is unable to work, but who worked for the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries over 40 years, was not receiving any help whatsoever, and was "having to go door to door bumming." Only after Mr. Bowman went to St. Paul for preliminary investigation, did the administration agree to give this man \$15.00 worth of groceries per month. (Tundra Times, June 21, 1965). How many groceries can be purchased for \$15.00 per month on St. Paul Island?

3. Mr. Flore Lekanof after his graduation from college and his subsequent marriage wanted to come to St. George, his home, to visit with his parents and to introduce his wife to them. The only way to accomplish this was to become a laborer on St. George. It is so simple: Either you work as a laborer and then you can come home, or you are not permitted to even visit your own parents.

4. After Deacon Gromoff stated in print that "We are in state of servitude" (Tundra Times Dec. 7 1964) Director of the Pribilofs started publicly to defame Deacon's character. Only after Fr. Baranoff wrote a letter to Tundra Times and stated that in his opinion Mr. Baltzo's statements are nothing else but malicious falsehood" did the director stop his defamation. I wonder is there any other place in the U.S. where a government official would publicly spread falsehood and be able to get away with that kind of official conduct?

5. Forceable removal of Aleuts from St. George Island, their ancestral land and demolition of their homes, so that they will not be able to return. Can this happen anywhere in our free country?

Article 3 of the Treaty of Cession guarantees "civilized tribes," "enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the U.S." Any international treaty signed by the U.S. is the LAW of our country.

In Tundra Times, Dec. 7, and Dec. 21, 1964, Director of the Pribilofs made the following statements: Dec. 7: "It is the natives who feel that we are ending servitude too rapidly." Obviously if the administration is "ending servitude," then it does exist. Dec. 21: "I do not understand the use of term servitude. It must be interpreted what servitude means."

But skies are not so hopelessly dark over the Pribilofs as they seem to be. U.S. Senator from Alaska, E. L. (Bob) Bartlett recently introduced a bill (S. 2102) on behalf of the Pribilovians. After this bill would go through various hearings, I am sure that it would emerge as the best possible bill, giving Pribilovians, for the first time in their lives the unquestionable status of the first class American citizens, the status which they have been entitled to from the day the U.S. and Russia signed the Treaty of Cession, March 30, 1867.