

St. Paul Is. Hosts Important Conference

Representatives of State and federal agencies and private industry are in the process of meeting on St. Paul Island this week to discuss various ways St. Paul could become more self sufficient—economically and politically.

The three day conference, which started Monday, is being held in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the St. Paul Island Council.

To help their cause, they asked various state and federal and business representatives to visit St. Paul, see conditions on the island and personally talk with members of the village council and individual members of the community.

The major concern of the village council is economic. As of now, St. Paul's only major source of income is the fur seal industry.

Till 1950, the Aleutians of St. Paul and the other Pribiloff Island, St. George, were held in virtual servitude. They were paid in cans of corned beef, tea, coffee and other foodstuffs for the seal furs they harvested.

The end of this practice, and a 1966 law which gave the Aleutians the right to self rule, opened the door for island self sufficiency.

This week, the representatives are discussing plans for the orderly economic development of St. Paul, on a wider economic base than the fur seal industry alone.

Some of the plans which are to be discussed, according to BIA officer Gordon Tracy, include construction of a small boat harbor and a related fishing industry and expanded tourist operations. Mr. Tracy lived on

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St. Paul Island Conference . . .

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St. Paul for three and a half years as head of the Bureau of Fisheries operation there.

The St. Paul village council has invited people from the State Economic Development Association, Small Business Administration, Bureau of Fisheries and numerous state and federal agencies.

Some private industries are also sending representatives. Holmes and Narver, a company which contracts housing facilities and food operations at federal installations in the Aleutians, is in St. Paul seeking a source of employees.

Bering Sea Originals, a company which deals in hand crafted articles, is participating to discuss the possibility of a handicraft industry in St. Paul. Many villages are talented, but have never had ways to market their work profitably. Grumman Aerospace, which is doing economic development work with some of the villages, also planned last week to send a representative to St. Paul.

The meeting this week is an exploratory meeting, exposing those who attend to St. Paul Island and "picking their brains" on possibilities for development.

As part of the discussion of economics, the villages wish to explore various systems of incorporation for local government, tax bases, ways of getting federal loans and assistance and estimates of the economic picture for the future.

Peter Three Stars, BIA tribal operations officer, is attending the conference as advisor on tribal organization. He will discuss with the St. Paul Islanders various types of local government associations they can set up.

According to Mr. Taylor, news of the meeting has generated a great deal of response.

Last month, the state government sent a man to St. Paul

to begin the food stamp program there and on St. George. The Public Health Service has sent people to the Pribiloff islands as well.

"We're looking forward to this being a real good meeting. We hope to get everyone aware of the problems and start seeking solutions from the village council's viewpoint, rather than a government viewpoint," Mr. Taylor said on Friday, prior to his departure.

Representatives at the conference, each of whom is being paid for by his or her own agency, were flown in by Reeve-Aleutian Airlines and are staying in the village hotel during the conference.

The airline diverted a flight to take the representatives in to St. Paul on Monday, a special consideration to allow them to spend less than a week on the island.

One topic of the meeting will be the village hotel, where the conferees are staying, and its possibilities for expansion. The village already operates tourist accommodations for seasonal government employees.

"The air line services have shown interest in expanding flights to St. Paul if tourism increased," said Mr. Taylor. Present service is on a once a week basis. During his time on St. Paul, Taylor was instrumental in helping the village council to take over operation of the village store, service station and part of the hotel.

As Bureau of Fisheries head on the island, Mr. Taylor trained local natives to take over fisheries operations.

Hopefully, this conference will find new means for economic development of the Pribiloff Islands, Mr. Taylor commented.

"We're trying to bring in every extra dollar we can to help the islanders get on their feet."