

Murkowski: Panel for Alaska Natives will pass in '90

Holly F. Hallam

Tundra Times reporter

A joint federal/state commission to deal with Alaska Native problems and issues is expected to get passed in next year's session of Congress, according to Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska.

Murkowski made the prediction last week at a press conference in his Anchorage office. He was referring to legislation that failed in Congress this year, which would have created the commission and funded it with \$300,000 with a stipulation that the state also appropriate \$300,000.

Murkowski said Congressman George Miller, R-Calif., had put "a spin on the bill" this year — delaying it in the House — while the 1989 session came to a close.

Although the bill has already passed in the Senate, Murkowski said he is optimistic that the legislation will pass in the House in 1990.

Other issues Murkowski talked about during his press conference included air transportation negotiations

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between U.S. and Soviet officials which took place recently in London.

Beside exchanging lists of preferred cities as destinations for new U.S.-Soviet air routes, according to Murkowski, both sides agreed that Magadan in the Soviet Far East must first be brought up to international civil aviation standards before it can be considered a stopping point.

Also discussed was the Soviet reactivation of a requirement that all charter flights departing Alaska for the Soviet Union have a Soviet navigator on board.

Murkowski met with Frank Cunningham, Alaska regional director for the Federal Aviation Administration, during his trip to Anchorage.

John Moseman, Murkowski's chief of staff, told the *Tundra Times* what happened during that meeting.

He said Bering Air, a charter service located in Nome, had to stop all flights to the Soviet Union because of the Soviet navigator requirement.

Moseman said the two men discussed what steps need to be taken to resume travel between the two countries.

And Moseman said Alaska is just waiting for information from the Soviets.

"Basically, what we need to get from the Soviets is very specific information — all information pilots need to fly safely," Moseman said during a telephone interview.

Moseman said it appeared that officials in Moscow had not been aware

of the Bering Air flights taking place. And when they found out about them, Moseman said, the officials said Alaska needs to meet the Soviets' requirement to continue the flights.

Murkowski said Soviet negotiators indicated in the London discussions that the civil aviation officials may have put the requirement into effect as a safety measure because there are not an adequate number of English speaking air traffic controllers at Provideniya, and not all U.S. charter airline pilots are fluent in Russian.

"I would like to think we can come to an understanding," Murkowski said.

"It's just going through the bureaucratic process," Murkowski said about the border reopening.

Currently, there are about 32 peo-

'I would like to think we can come to an understanding.'

—Sen. Frank Murkowski

ple on St. Lawrence Island who have spent about \$700 getting passports so they can visit friends and relatives across the Bering Strait. But now they must wait until the Soviets let Alaska resume flights.