

by Frank McCurdy)

*Pacific Daily News, Mon, Nov. 12, 1973*

# Ask Airport Confab ✓

Sen. Paul Calvo said yesterday he will seek a meeting for the Legislature with Guam's airport consultant to find out how the island's tourist industry is threatened by the development of a new international air terminal on Saipan.

Saipan officials announced over the weekend that a \$2.5 million terminal would be opened at Isley Field in April 1975.

Calvo said he will ask Gov. Camacho and Speaker Florencio T. Ramirez to arrange to have consultant Leigh Fisher brief members of the Legislature, the Governor and members of his staff on the Saipan airport and the impact it could have on Guam. Calvo said he had learned that Fisher, who is consultant for both Guam and the Isley Field project, will be on the

island this week.

"My own belief is that Guam's tourist industry could be seriously damaged if the Legislature and the Governor don't start to work together at once to improve Guam's airport facilities. I have already introduced a bill that would authorize \$25 million for the construction of a new international air terminal over a period of five years, commencing in 1976, but we can't wait that long to rehabilitate what we've got," Calvo said.

Calvo warned that not only is a new airfield on Saipan a threat to Guam "but that we have also got to worry about the Philippines. There is no question but that the Philippine government is making an all out push for the Japanese tourist,

and Manila is only 295 miles further from Tokyo than is Guam. It's a less expensive place to go and it has a wide variety of tourist attractions," Calvo said.

He added that if Guam allows its tourist image to slip away "we will fall back to relying upon a military oriented economy alone. That would not be in the best interest of the people of this island. We've reached a point in our history where we want to move ahead in our political status, but to do that we've got to have diversification in our economy."

happens? Or would we be forced to approve a similar gambling situation here, or watch our visitor industry go down the drain?

We are concerned about the Saipan airport facilities affecting our own, because we don't have that all-important joint use agreement with the Navy, and continued pressure brought by the Navy over use of Brewer Field could easily force several airlines to shift their operation to Saipan. This would be particularly true for the airlines such as China Air Lines, Korean Air Lines, Nauru, and other airlines that are now just using Guam as a refueling and resupplying stop. For the major lines, such as TWA and Pan Am, we doubt whether they would switch from Guam, with its hundred thousand population, to a place ten times smaller, because they do depend upon local passengers.

Saipan doesn't have any real bowl of cherries ahead of them, despite the glowing outlook. They are still far behind in the vital infrastructure area, and to catch up it may take five or ten years, if ever. They have inadequate power, water, phones and sewage, not to say anything about a shortage of labor, an inadequate highway system, an inadequate health system. Plus this, they haven't clearly resolved their political status question, and right now are neither fish nor fowl. They aren't yet an American territory, or Commonwealth, and until this is resolved investors are going to find that investing capital there will continue to be difficult, if not impossible.

We are very firm believers in the "joint destination" theory. People travel to Los Angeles because of Disneyland, and Hollywood, and Long Beach, and San Diego, and the variety of places to go and see. When they travel to the Carribean, they want to see Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Trinidad, Haiti, and a dozen other islands if possible. Guam isn't much as a single destination, but if it can be tied in with Saipan, Rota, Pagan, Truk, or Palau, it has a much better chance for success.

We think Saipan is a very attractive place, a quiet, peaceful place, with a good deal to offer scenically, and historically, especially for the Japanese. But it too can be overbuilt quickly, and that could destroy the very peaceful, quiet image that it now has.

Our main point is that we can't sit around worrying about competition. We must do everything possible to make Guam a vital, and imaginative center in its own right. We must also take the initiative in working closely with the Saipanese, in order to make all of the islands of the Marianas a viable destination for the people of the world interested in spending their money. In the past such a working relationship has been sadly lacking. Again, we welcome the competition on the oft chance it may put us on our toes. JCM.

## Pacific Daily News

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