

## Keen Competition.....

There has been growing fear of competition, expressed in recent days, between the island of Saipan, and Guam.

Is such fear valid, or are we making a Mt. Lamlam out of a gecko hole?

In yesterday's Daily News Sen. Paul Calvo warned that not only is a new airfield on Saipan a threat to Guam "but that we also have to worry about the Philippines." He said that it is his own belief that Guam's tourism industry could be seriously damaged if the Legislature and the Governor don't start to work together at once to improve Guam's airport facility. Calvo introduced a bill which would authorize \$25 million for the construction of a new international air terminal over a period of five years, beginning in 1976. Earlier Sen. Jerry Rivera had called for building a new air facility at Northwest Field.

Sen. Calvo made the point 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."

Marianas Assistant District Administrator, Dan Akimoto, in Saipan, said that they hope to have from 800 to 1,000 hotel rooms available by 1975 when the new Isley Field is completed there. Akimoto said that Guam could very well suffer when Saipan's airport is completed, and Japan Airlines and others bring in 747 jets. "Many tourists from Japan will spend a few days a week on Saipan and return to Japan. The route could well be Japan, Saipan, Honolulu," he said.

Magnanimously, though, Mr. Akimoto said, "however, we don't want to ruin Guam's tourist industry. If we could make a tour package of Guam, Saipan, Rota, Tinian and Pagan, we would all benefit." Thanks a lot fella.

Incidentally, in the discussion of comparison between Guam and Saipan's proposed airfields, does anyone see something unusual here? Say, they are both starting from the same background, i.e., the use of a former Air Force runway, Isley in Saipan, and Northwest Field in Guam. There is a small difference, with Saipan spending approximately \$2.5 million on its new facilities, while Sen. Calvo has proposed the expenditure of \$25 million—or ten times as much, for Guam's facility. Also the Isley Field rehabilitation, and the building of the terminal is expected to take less than two years—actually closer to one year in the construction of the terminal, while we on Guam talk very casually about building a terminal over a five year period, beginning in 1976. Are they that much more efficient on Saipan?

While we do see some competition stemming from Saipan's emergence as a tourism destination, we don't see that as being all bad. Competition, in our opinion, is an excellent stimulant—and apparently we need such a boost on Guam to get us moving. We've had a five year head start on Saipan, but seemed to have lost our drive and initiative. We seem to be content to just let the tourists flow in, without regard to how they enjoy the island, and what our chances are for them returning for a second, or third visit.

It's possible that such competition might spur us into getting off the dime, and really putting out a tourist product that will attract visitors. Too, our own tourism officials could profit by watching the Saipan operation, and the often excellent ideas they are developing there, much as the Saipanese officials are profiting from the "mistakes" Guam has made over the years in our tourism program. This should be an interesting game. For instance, if Saipan goes ahead, as some have suggested, and opens up the island for legalized gambling. Could we afford to sit back and wait to see what happens? Or would we be forced to approve a similar gambling situation here, or watch our visitor industry go down the drain?