

# Hawaii's Plans for Future Relations with the Other Pacific Islands

by

Mr. Hideto Kono

Director, Department of Planning & Economic Development

State of Hawaii

Good evening! I am grateful for the invitation to discuss Hawaii's future relations with the other Pacific Islands. As State Director of Planning for the past four and a quarter years, foretelling the future has been one of my major preoccupations. I would, if I could, prefer to foretell the future far beyond the twenty-first century, as I would then be secure in the chance that I would not be a personal witness to being proven wrong.

Nevertheless, I am required by the nature of my present position to look toward the nearer future, to outguess fate, and to help plant today for tomorrow's harvest. So, with some reservations, I dare to discuss our future relationships with the other Pacific Islands, the presentation assigned to me by your program chairwoman.

Let us first, together, try to grasp the scope of the Pacific Islands. There are, as you know, thousands of them, many vacant and many others inhabited. They represent hundreds of communities of people of different languages, customs, lifestyles, traditions, hopes and fears. A glance at the map of the Pacific shows the enormity of the region, sprinkled with islands as the heavens are sprinkled with stars.

Yet this vastness should not discourage our desire for contact, communication, and working together for the common good. You must recall the miracles of modern technology if you are at first dismayed by the awesome size and distances of the Pacific Islands region. Consider, for example, that on

the mainland there is a United States population of about 220 million persons. Within five minutes, I can reach almost any one of those 220 million people, talk with him or her, confide anything I want to confide, convey messages important or trivial, and even tell a funny joke and have that person burst out laughing 6,000 miles away. Such is the miracle of our age of swift communication. And often within 10 to 20 hours, I can, if I wish, be at that person's side. Such is our miracle of modern transportation.

So it is important to remind ourselves of such marvels and miracles which we now take so much for granted, when we wish to consider our future in the Pacific. Given the grace of God and the ingenuity of man, we can dream dreams of transportation, communication, and other advances which will, in a not too distant future, make our present world seem primitive in comparison.

Among the first and most important steps we must take in preparing for future relationships between Hawaii and the other Pacific Islands is to avoid taking things for granted. We must avoid thinking small, being manini in our outlook, or thinking in stereotypes. For example, we must not take for granted that because Hawaii has millions of income-producing tourists, that all the Pacific Islands would need and would benefit from more tourism. We must avoid-- and this is a hard one for us to swallow--requiring that everyone must speak our English language, rather than the native tongue of the Tongans or the Tokelau Islanders. We must not insist that a materialistic culture predominate in lands which have long treasured religious or familial values as supreme. In short, we must learn to live with diversity, relishing differences while working in a spirit of mutual helpfulness toward varying goals. We must avoid at all costs the idea that because Hawaii has been blessed with material prosperity, that we have also cornered the market on wisdom and intelligence.

At the same time, there are practical things we can and should do here and now to foster the spirit of Pacific harmony and community.

Governor George Ariyoshi in his preface to a publication, Hawaii and the Other Pacific Islands, published recently by my department referred to the many links Hawaii already had developed with the other peoples in the Pacific region. Noting the newly independent States which have been established, the Governor said,

"In this historical ferment of political, social, cultural and economic change, Hawaii cannot sit passively as an unconcerned spectator. Hawaii has solemn obligations based upon its unique geographical location, its Polynesian roots and pattern of historical development, its present economic leadership among the many Island groups, and its diverse ethnic and cultural ties with other Pacific communities.

"Hawaii is called to offer itself as a leader, a partner, a friend, a counselor, a cooperating Sister-State to any and all in the Pacific who would desire such a relationship. This special role would be carried out, of course, within the constitutional and legal limitations imposed upon each of the 50 States of the Union. But while there exist certain limitations, there also are many latitudes and freedoms which generate enthusiasm for action."

It was Governor Ariyoshi who, in his interest in expanding our Pacific contacts, last April named Mr. Myron Thompson, the Bishop Estate trustee, as the Governor's Special Assistant for the Pacific Islands. Currently in our State Government, we have a number of activities concerned with the other Pacific Islands, including three in the Department of Planning & Economic Development: Foreign-Trade Zone No. 9, the Hawaii International Services Agency, and the Economic Development Division. There is also the multinationally supported East-West Center; the many University programs with which you are certainly familiar, and of course the private sector's many companies and agencies including the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council.

All of these activities have built upon the hard work and experience of people who have gone on before us, and to whom we owe much gratitude. Hawaii is recognized today as a center for many activities closely related to the

other Pacific Islands. But the future must be planned. It should not simply occur. Our planning should consider a number of potentials for relationships with the other Pacific Island groups which can be mutually profitable. Among these are business and commercial ties including more efficient organization; energy cooperation; tourism and tropical agriculture growth; and cultural and intellectual links.

In the business sector, innovative risk-taking efforts are sorely needed in this Pacific region. There are hundreds of products which thousands of islanders need, but the financing of production, training of workers, marketing and transporting of products, and governmental red tape, all remain formidable barriers. Hawaii could be an ideal test market for products from the other Islands. It could also be a source of supplies for those myriad Islands, provided logistics problems can be worked out. By becoming a central headquarters for what might be called a Pacific Islands cooperative, Hawaii could bring about economies of scale and volume efficiencies which individual Island communities, working alone, could not develop. This is theoretical, of course; making theory work is a very difficult task indeed, but not a hopeless one for enterprising entrepreneurs.

In the field of tourism, Hawaii offers outstanding experience in how to manage a multibillion-dollar industry competently, efficiently and profitably. But our industry and our economic success make other Pacific Island communities somewhat nervous while desirous of participation in its benefits. While some, I feel sure, are envious of the economic benefits tourism brings, they want nothing of a business which seriously threatens to destroy or extensively change the social and cultural patterns of their Island community. Hawaii should have no part in pressing upon such communities our ideas or progress, but should nevertheless be open to whatever exchanges can be mutually beneficial. Above

all, it should be our goal to assist--in ways from which we also will profit-- such communities in their desire to upgrade social welfare without harm to the already existing cultural patterns.

Food production and distribution would seem to offer unlimited opportunities to many Pacific Island communities for economic adventures. Hawaii has demonstrated its skills in scientific agriculture and aquaculture, particularly in sugar, pineapple, macadamia nuts, flowers and foliage, Malaysian (now Hawaiian) prawns, and other tropical products. We need to share our expertise with others. We need to link ourselves with Pacific Island areas which can teach us things, too. New Federal legislation provides for Food for Peace funding and additional monies for land-grant and sea-grant universities. The declaration by nearly all Pacific Island States of 200-mile economic resource zones surrounding their Islands adds thousands of miles of fishing resources area for their vessels. Hawaii can serve as a good and continuing market for imported agricultural products from other Pacific Islands, and one hopes the expanded incomes generated by such sales will enable those Islands to buy other products from us in a mutually satisfying trade.

Hawaii's rather remarkable advances in energy should be helpful to other Pacific Island communities. We now have more than 6,000 solar water heaters in Hawaii, and the technology of such solar collectors appears to improve and to become simpler and more efficient with time. Wind energy obtained through technologically sophisticated machinery could bring remarkable improvement in the living conditions of poorer Pacific Island communities. Modern technology has performed production miracles for agriculture all over the world, and we should be alert to the potentials for helping Pacific Islanders through innovative energy producers such as windmills, biomass, photovoltaic cells, and other small-is-beautiful-and-useful technology.

Communications for the vast Pacific Islands region need considerable improvement. This need, incidentally, is an example of economic opportunities for jobs and profits. The satellite era has offered new hope for eventual telecommunication links among the hundreds of scattered island communities. Rapid advances in communication technology using the remarkable improvement in microelectronics give promise of a new era for Pacific communications. The introduction of such technology will, of course, bring mixed results because of the pressures that modern technology-oriented cultures--such as today's Hawaii--impose on the slower tempos of geographically distant Islands. Communications is the forerunner of other developments; knowledge, greater understanding, increased exchange of information and opinion all increase the human desire for change, betterment, and progress. It is probably in the field of increased communication that Hawaii can best serve other Pacific Islands. We already have, of course, the PEACESAT project--Pan Pacific Education and Communication Experiments by Satellite--which uses a NASA satellite and is now in its 11th year of linking Hawaii and other users, notably the University of the South Pacific. It is a forerunner of many other potentials for exchanging facts, knowledge and aspirations. But, such discussion brings us once again to the front lines of philosophical differences about where Pacific Island cultures are to go. Shall the Solomon Islands receive Shakespeare financed by Mobil or Shell Oil, and view the inner turmoil of a New York ghetto subculture, or Hollywood's sex life? Again I refer to my earlier remarks about our own culture intruding as an allegedly superior one on those allegedly more primitive.

It is with such potentials and problems in mind that we must recall Hawaii's heritage as a Polynesian island group, and our roots-relationship with other island cultures. Our previously mentioned Departmental report on Hawaii and the

Other Pacific Islands contains the following interesting reference to cultural exchange:

"At the 1976 South Pacific Festival of Arts in Rotorua, New Zealand, the Hawaii delegation was the smallest of all of the Island groups represented. Nevertheless, the Hawaii group performed a wide variety of chants and dances on stage, exhibited arts and crafts including feather-cloak making, and introduced Hawaiian sports and games to the thousands of New Zealanders and tourists present at the week-long gathering. There were several 'firsts' involved in this Hawaiian presence in Rotorua:

"It was the first time Hawaii was invited to send a delegation. At an earlier Festival of Arts, held in Fiji, Hawaii wasn't really considered to be a part of the Pacific Community, and hence was not invited.

"It was the first time most in the standing-room-only audiences had an opportunity to see and hear traditional Hawaiian chants and dances performed. Most in the audience expected contemporary hula dancing of the Hollywood-stereotype variety, and it turned out to be an enlightening experience for all concerned.

"It was the first time many in the Hawaiian group were able to communicate with native speakers using other Polynesian dialects, and to be understood in turn. The New Zealand Maori hosts in Rotorua were excited to find that they could communicate (in Maori) with their far-flung relations across the Pacific. For many Maoris, it reawakened their interest in their cultural heritage and encouraged them to seek additional forms of exchange for the future."

You will also recall the tremendous excitement of the 1976 voyage of Hokule'a to French Polynesia. We in Hawaii cannot fully understand the impact of that canoe's voyage on the canoe conscious societies south of us. We must expand such cultural links for they strengthen the warm human contacts and the mutual understanding and appreciation that form the basis of all social progress and improvement.

In our relationships with the other Pacific island communities, we must not forget how rural they are. This means Hawaii has a special potential for working with them if we remember the pace, lifestyle, and size of our own Neighbor Island communities. For example, Papua New Guinea occupies one half of the second largest island in the world, yet its capital, Port Moresby, has

only 75,000 people--just about the same as the total population of the Island of Hawaii. We would do well to involve our Neighbor Islands more in relationships with other island groups for inter-cultural exchange and for information on patterns of community settlement, water, energy, other utility development and so forth.

To sum up: the future I envision for Hawaii's relationships with the other Pacific Islands is one of a steady increase in links and understanding; a slow but steady growth in business and commercial ties; perhaps a faster growth in communication; an increased sharing of small-scale technology; and a warmer, deeper cultural appreciation of each other, leading eventually to a Pacific Islands regional approach to dealing with the rest of the world. Such relationships will increase Hawaii's importance and stature as a Pacific Islands leader recognized by all, provided we deepen our understanding of our Sister-Islands to the south and west, and hold them in utmost respect.

Mahalo.