

May 14, 1974
P.O. Box 1346
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

Lt. Gov. George Ariyoshi, Chairman
Kohala Task Force
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Lt. Gov. Ariyoshi,

I have noted with great interest the article in HAWAII BUSINESS (Dec 1973) which indicates that the Kohala Task Force has granted \$50,000 in state funds to implement the commercial rearing of green sea turtles in Hawaii. Indication is also given that the Task Force's rationale in this action is, in part, based on the fact that "Such turtles are currently being raised commercially in the Caribbean...." (section of article attached).

In order to better acquaint each Task Force member with the present state of the art of green turtle farming, I have enclosed pertinent reference material which I am sure will be of interest. This background literature consists of:

1. Conserving the Edible Sea Turtle: Can Mariculture Help? by Dr. David W. Ehrenfeld (reproduced from the Jan-Feb 1974 issue of AMERICAN SCIENTIST);
2. Great Reptiles, Great Enigmas by Dr. Archie Carr, the world's foremost authority on sea turtles (reproduced from the March 1972 issue of AUDUBON);
3. Copies of correspondence by Dr. Carr relating to the commercial farming of sea turtles. Please note that two of these letters were directed to the firm Mariculture Ltd., the only commercial sea turtle farm in existence;
4. A copy of correspondence by the Field Director of The Fund for Animals which summarizes some of the relevant points concerning the operations of Mariculture Ltd. No reply was received;
5. A copy of correspondence which I sent to the editors of AMERICAN SCIENTIST in support of Dr. Ehrenfeld's article.

As an individual who has been active in the research and conservation of sea turtles, I appreciate the opportunity to bring this information to your attention.

Sincerely,

George H. Balazs

cc
Mr. Frederick Erskine
Mr. John Bellinger
Dr. Robert Cushing
Councilman John Farias
Mr. Sunao Kido
Mayor Shunichi Kimura

Dr. Shelley Mark
Mrs. A.Q. McElrath
Mr. William McPeck
Mr. Eddie Tangen
Mr. George Yim

tons, plus a new mill with a capacity of 20 tons per hour. This project is now employing two former plantation technicians, and plans are to add ten more employees in the near future.

Feedwell has a firm commitment from the Task Force for \$450,000 in loans, another \$210,000 bank-SBA loan and some \$150,000 in equity. The relocation is designed to take advantage not only of the proximity of Kawaihae to the bulk of the Big Island's cattle operations, but particularly to the planned integrated pen-feeding facilities of Hawaii Biogenics.

There are other diversified agricultural schemes in Kohala's immediate future. Early next year a new firm called Orchids Pacifica is expected to go



Bill McPeck, the only Kohalan on the Task Force, is taking a wait-and-see attitude.

into operation on about 300 acres of leased land the company is now negotiating for with Bishop Estate.

Orchids Pacifica is pinning its hopes on a blossoming Mainland demand for orchids, plus improved growing methods which it reckons will help it produce high quality blossoms in substantial quantity. With \$601,000 in Task Force funding, another \$300,000 from a bank loan, and \$140,000 of equity capital, the project expects to hire approximately 23 workers initially, with a payroll working up to 45 within three years. Again, however, there remain questions regarding the pay the nursery jobs will provide.

From orchids to fish

The other project that the Task Force feels will materialize in 1974 is an aquaculture operation being proposed by oceanographer-promoter Tap Pryor and two other principals. The team recently received a \$50,000 grant from the Task Force to do a final feasi-

bility and market study on the concept, which involves raising green sea turtles and oysters. Such turtles are currently being raised commercially in the Caribbean, and oysters have been grown in many locations for years. The new twist involved would be utilizing the turtle waste as oyster feed. Tests are now underway at Makapuu and Kaneohe Bay, and while things are still nebulous, Task Force chairman Ariyoshi feels that the project will be breaking ground in Kohala by mid-1974.

There are a host of other projects in various stages of development for Kohala, but only a few are likely to materialize. A small plastics factory is being promoted by a hui which includes former *Advertiser* columnist Eddie Sherman. An International Heart and Lung Institute has been proposed, and an oil refinery is being promoted. A meat processing plant appears to be definitely in the future for Kohala, but the who, where, and when are all open.

Although a review of projects either underway or proposed produces a sense of Task Force productivity and success, the image of the effort among the average Kohalan is negative, if not cynical. There exist many reasons for the apparent credibility gap, some within the control and presumably the responsibility of the Task Force, and others which seem to be inherent in the situation itself. The Task Force, however, has so far developed little rapport with the community it was appointed to serve.

Four major doubts

Skepticism and arguments against the Task Force fall roughly into four broad categories—political, economic, agricultural and social. The water is far too muddy at this point to say what final impact these criticisms will have on the Kohala Task Force itself, or on future efforts to rescue other communities facing similar problems.

Politically, the Task Force has been criticized as being too heavily weighted with outsiders (the original body of 12 was notable for the fact that not one member represented Kohala, and only three came from the Big Island). Also inevitable was criticism that has labeled the effort an attempt to help shore up the ILWU, consolidate the Burns administration's political influence on the Big Island, and place a substantial amount of financial largesse in the hands of the governor's supporters.

Economic criticisms generally center around the unproven nature of the pro-

jects being developed, the amount of money being given, the selection of recipients of the Task Force's awards, and what to some has seemed a lack of adequate evaluation and fiscal control of the projects. Some farmers wonder, for example, why an untried orchid growing project is being pushed while anthurium operations, which are already successful elsewhere on the Big Island, are being ignored. There are also those Kohalans who simply want small parcels



Mayor Shunichi Kimura, though on the Task Force's executive committee, isn't identified with some of its loftier goals.

of land on which to pursue independent farming and ranching operations and who wonder how much more benefit would be derived if they could get some land and some of the millions being spent to promote new and untried ventures.

Moreover, doubts have been raised concerning the adequacy of water supplies for intensive diversified agricultural operations. However, the first phase of a \$100,000 Task Force water study indicates that enough water is available. A second phase is now tackling the question of how to organize the delivery system for the new uses projected.

Not enough known

The simple truth is that not enough is yet known about how successful any of the proposed farm or ranching schemes will be to allow definitive pronouncements, not to mention the difficulties involved in weighing these unknowns against just as unknown alternatives. There is still substantial disagreement even among Task Force members, for example, as to whether sugar