An Extraordinary Opportunity

An extraordinary opportunity for a simultaneous development of a splendid sport and a new feature of civic beautification is offered in the plan outlined to representatives of Honolulu boat clubs yesterday by Col. R. McA. Schofield, executive officer of the Territorial Fair Commission.

Waikiki channel, cut from the sea at Kewalo in a long arc through the Waikiki swamps to meet the sea again at Kapiolani park, is now being dredged to a width of 150 feet. It is proposed to widen this channel to 250 feet. At the Kapiolani park end, the canal will run along the makai side of the territorial fair grounds. Col. Schofield's plan, in brief, is to provide on these grounds sites for clubhouses for the Honolulu rowing clubs. In addition to the building sites, locations would be afforded for tennis and handball courts, a swimming-pool and other recreative facilities.

If the channel is widened to 250 feet, there is ample room for shell- and barge-racing, not to speak of scull, pair-oar, canoe, outrigger canoe and other events.

A course of a full mile and a half, of which approximately a mile will be straightaway, will be possible, and if the bridges across this channel are suitably designed, the racing crews can row up this course three abreast.

Honolulu boat-clubs sorely need better accommodations and facilities than they now have. It is obvious that the Honolulu harbor must be given over to the rapidly-increasing commerce of this port. The clubs will have to move from their present sites. But if they are to continue in existence—and they ought to continue in existence—they must have permanent sites and much better racing facilities than they have had for years past.

Rowing is a splendid sport—splendid for physical, mental and moral development. In Hawaii it is more than a sport—it is a community institution. Regatta Day is a holiday—one of the gayest, most colorful, most enjoyable of the year.

The development of the Waikiki channel as proposed will, however, have a far greater benefit than merely to afford superb racing facilities for club crews. It will make of the Waikiki channel an inland waterway of remarkable potential beauty and value to the entire city. If the boat clubs remove to the suggested sites, Honolulu will see not merely excellent racing, but water pageants in settings that not even Venice can excel. Imagine a straightaway mile of water, calm as a tidal river, lined on each side with well-parked driveways, lighted at night with cluster-lights, busy with canoes, outrigger craft, small sailing-boats and motorboats.

There is, furthermore, a prosaic and very practical reason why this proposed widening would be advisable. Engineers are beginning to say that there will not be sufficient material dredged from the canal with a width of only 150 feet to fill in all the low-lying land at Waikiki which has been ordered filled. And it will be very much cheaper to cut an extra hundred-foot strip and use the material on lands otherwise below level, than to get the material elsewhere.

The hundred-foot strip which it is proposed to include in the channel-area is already public property, so that condemnation proceedings are not necessary. Provided the territory's interests are sufficiently protected in the taking of this strip, and provided the cost of the dredging is reasonable, the project which has been outlined to the boat clubs seems to offer an opportunity of which immediate advantage should be taken. It is hoped that the legislature will decide that this suggested widening is worthy of authorization at this time.