



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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STATEMENT ON HAWAIIAN STATEHOOD BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FRED A. SEATON BEFORE
SENATE INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, AS DELIVERED BY UNDER
SECRETARY HATFIELD CHILSON, APRIL 2, 1957

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As you know, because of Secretary Seaton's confinement to Walter Reed Hospital, he is unable to be here today. I have therefore been asked to present the following statement--which is the Secretary's own--in support of immediate statehood for Hawaii.

The Administration recommends, in the words of the President's 1957 Budget Message, the "enactment of legislation admitting Hawaii into the Union as a State."

The Territory we have known as Hawaii since 1898, when it was annexed to the United States, embraces an area of over 6,400 square miles; it is composed of a series of eight islands which form part of the Hawaiian archipelago. Captain James Cook "discovered" these islands in 1778, and in honor of the English Earl of Sandwich, named them the Sandwich Islands.

The people of Hawaii have looked toward the United States for more than a century. In 1820 New England Christian missionaries converted Hawaiians to Christianity. Through the nineteenth century, as ties of friendship and trade grew stronger, the desire of Hawaiians to be Americans became more vocal.

As early as 1854 her people requested their king to bring about the annexation of the Islands to the United States. During the same year, a treaty was drafted at the request of President Pierce. That Treaty included the assumption that the constitutional monarchy would become a State in a manner similar to that of Texas and California.

After the Queen was deposed in 1893, the Republic of Hawaii was established as an interim government. In 1898 Hawaii was formally annexed as an "integral part of the United States". It became an "incorporated Territory" when Congress enacted its Organic Act in 1900.

At the time Hawaii was annexed, there were but three other incorporated Territories--Oklahoma, Arizona, and New Mexico. Ever since, the Hawaiian people have awaited the day when Hawaii would follow these other Territories and become a full and equal member of our nation.

The Hawaiian people have pursued this goal with diligence. Since 1903 the Territorial Legislature has petitioned nearly every Congress to admit Hawaii as an equal partner in our government. Since 1919 every Hawaiian Delegate to Congress has introduced a statehood bill. Since 1935--twenty-two years ago--Congress has actively investigated this Territory to determine whether her apprenticeship has been completed.

I firmly believe that it has, and that the time has therefore come for action.

Both major political parties have, in their platforms, declared themselves in favor of immediate statehood for Hawaii.

Nevertheless, arguments against Hawaiian statehood are still heard.

On February 20, 1952, in addressing the Senate on the subject of statehood for Alaska, I said:

"Mr. President, the old adage, 'There is nothing new under the sun' could hardly be truer than in its application to the objections we hear to statehood for Alaska.

"The same type of objections were made against practically every Territory which ever applied for admission as a State. Experience has proved the objections false. California, Oregon, Wyoming, Arizona, Nebraska, and the others have gone on to become perfectly respectable and self-sufficient States despite the cries which were raised against them in earlier sessions of Congress. Each is a credit to itself and to the Union."

Opponents of Hawaiian statehood object that the Islands are not contiguous to the 48 States which now make up our Union. True, not one of these States is entirely separated from the rest by water. But what about California in 1850? She was not denied admission, even though traveling from here to California in 1850 meant crossing the vast western plains, infested with hostile Indian tribes, or going 13,355 nautical miles around Cape Horn. Even after the opening of the Panama Canal, San Francisco was almost twice as far from New York in nautical miles as the distance between Honolulu and the Golden Gate.

Hawaii is less than 5,000 air miles from Washington. It is only 2,400 miles from San Francisco. Any one of us could be in Honolulu in less than 18 hours. From the West Coast, Hawaii is but an overnight plane ride away. During debate upon the Hawaiian Organic Act, Senator Richard Pettigrew remarked that Hawaii was "only twelve days from Washington." Gentlemen, we will soon see the time when we may travel to the Islands in as many hours. In this modern age of rapid transportation, neither contiguity nor distance should be factors in the consideration of statehood for Hawaii.

In the past, opposition has been expressed against the admission of this Territory because of fears concerning the loyalty of Hawaiian-Americans.

The hearings before this Committee and the Committee of the House contain a full account of the heroic performance of Hawaiians in World War I, World War II, and the Korean conflict. Whatever doubts there may have been about the loyalty of Hawaiian-Americans, they were completely dispelled by the fact that in all of World War II there was not one known case of sabotage by a Hawaiian civilian.

The Hawaiian Statehood Commission cites these facts to refute those who impugn the loyalty of Hawaiians:

"Not one case of cowardice by a Hawaii soldier in the face of the Communist enemy was recorded in Korea.

"Not one case of successful Red 'brainwashing' of any Hawaii soldier was recorded.

"Not one case of a Hawaii soldier's desertion to the enemy was recorded.

"Of the 22 American servicemen who refused repatriation after the Korean war in favor of remaining with the Communists...there was not one from Hawaii.

"There were 426 Hawaii boys killed in Korea action, a death toll four and one-half times the killed-in-action average for the rest of the United States. There were 1,352 total battle casualties from Hawaii, a rate three times as great as the casualty rate per capita for the rest of the nation."

Another objection to statehood is based upon the extent of the communist influence in Hawaii and concern over the activities of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). Before 1953 my fellow Nebraskan, the late and distinguished United States Senator Hugh Butler, expressed vigorous opposition to admission of Hawaii on the basis of his findings regarding communist infiltration of the ILWU. But because of his innate fairness and willingness to approach each question with an open mind, Senator Butler became a staunch advocate of Hawaiian statehood when he was convinced that the people of Hawaii had the will and determination to resist communism. After conducting an inspection of Hawaii in 1947, he presented a report to the Senate recommending that statehood not be granted until Hawaiians demonstrated ~~by~~ "by positive steps a determination to put down the menace of lawless communism."

In November of 1952, Senator Butler returned to the Islands, accompanied by two staff members of this committee; he again investigated the Hawaiian communist problem. At the opening of hearings on S. 49 in 1953, Senator Butler said:

"I believe that the residents of Hawaii during the past four years since publication of my 1949 report have demonstrated by positive action their awareness of the Communist danger and their determination to face it frankly and never let it strengthen its foothold. During those years they have fought it boldly, have restricted its influence, and to some degree have driven it underground. I believe they have shown that they are as well able as the Federal Government to cope with this menace."

It was typical of the distinguished Senator that he did not hesitate publicly to reverse his judgment to fit the facts as he found them.

Would the Communist malignancy be any more of a threat to an Hawaiian state government than it is to the present territorial government? I see no reason to believe so. I believe that Hawaii will be stronger and more able to resist this movement when Hawaiians become full-fledged citizens with an equal voice not only in national and international affairs, but also in the selection of their own state government and judiciary.

If admitted as a State, will Hawaii meet the financial strains of statehood? There appears to be no question that these islands have a very stable economy. The total annual production of the islands doubles that of any other Territory prior to statehood. With such basic industries as agriculture and tourism, Hawaii looks forward to a greater opportunity to provide the mainland with both food and recreation.

The Lord richly blessed this tropical paradise which Mark Twain called "the loveliest fleet of islands that lie at anchor in any ocean." The year-round agricultural industry has furnished our Nation annually with a sugar crop of over one million tons valued at approximately 150 million dollars. Twenty-two thousand workers, on the average, are employed every year to harvest and pack Hawaii's pineapple crop, which in 1956 added another 116.8 million dollars to the value of Hawaii's exports to the mainland.

Of course, Hawaiians have other valuable natural resources. Fishing has traditionally been a mainstay of the economy of the islands. The fisheries of Hawaii yield an annual catch of about 20 million pounds of fish and shellfish having an ex-vessel value of about \$3,750,000.

Over 80 percent of the catch consists of tuna which is used for marketing fresh and for canning. In addition, quantities of these fish are imported from Japan for the fresh market and also for canning. A considerable portion of the production of canned tuna is shipped to the United States.

A distinctive feature of the Hawaiian fishery is the pond fishery, which yields an annual catch of about 100,000 pounds, valued at about \$50,000.

Hawaiian minerals such as titanium and bauxite are today receiving considerable attention. Dr. Paul L. Magill, a chemist for Stanford Research Associates, stated in a recent report on bauxite—the raw material for aluminum—that the island of Hawaii alone contains more than 300 square miles of rich ore—a reserve of 600 million tons. This amount is enough to supply the United States for 100 years.

A resource yet to be tapped, except for hardwood used in furniture and cabinet making, is timber.

More than 133,000 tourists, lured by sunshine and the islands' natural beauty, visited Hawaii last year. Their spending alone added almost 66 million dollars to Hawaii's annual income. Two of the attractions of which we in the Department of the Interior are truly proud are the Hawaiian National Park, containing the world's largest active volcano, Mauna Loa, with its "pit of eternal fire," and the City of Refuge National Historical Park at Honaunau. This is a large semiwalled enclosure established before 1700 as a place where the weak, the aged, and others could find a haven.

These facts are not the only evidence of Hawaii's strength. The Hawaiian Islands, roughly the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined, have almost 560,000 inhabitants; more than 85% of these are native-born American citizens. The military establishment, with such permanent facilities as the Pearl Harbor Naval Base, six Army posts, and Hickam Air Force Base adds at least 50,000 to Hawaii's population.

Last year Hawaiians paid over 140 million dollars in Federal taxes, approximately 50 percent of which was withheld for income and payroll taxes. The labor force of over 210,000 was almost 96 percent employed in 1956. An important factor in Hawaii's expanding economy is that almost one-half the islands' people are under 24 years of age. Hawaii's Economic Planning and Coordination Authority, a territorial agency created to assist new and expanding industries, predicts that "the Territory will witness an increase of about 100,000 in its labor force in the next 20 years." Further statistics compiled by the E.P.C.A. show that manufacturing in Hawaii increased by 830 percent between 1940 and 1955. Last year, 514 Hawaiian manufacturers, employing 22,411 people, were engaged in almost every type of manufacturing known on the mainland.

This dynamic Hawaiian economy compares favorably to that of any State of the Union.

In addition, the Hawaiian people are well-informed concerning current developments in the world. As a newspaperman, I was pleased to learn that Hawaii has 23 newspapers, including seven dailies, serviced by all the major wire services. The islands also have complete radio and TV coverage.

The strategic value of Hawaii to our Nation should not be overlooked. Even before the coming of rapid air and surface transportation, this was recognized. As early as 1852, Representative J. W. McConkle of California asked the Congress to annex these islands because of their importance to the United States in war as well as in peace. This importance was brought home to all of us once and for all on December 7, 1941.

In 1955, a report of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee summarized the rights which statehood would accord to Americans in Hawaii:

"1. The right to full voting representation in both the United States Senate and House of Representatives;

"2. The right to vote for the President and Vice President of the United States;

"3. The right to choose their own governor and to carry on functions of government by their own elected officials instead of Federal administrators;

"4. The right to determine the extent of the powers to be exercised by their own legislature;

"5. The right to have justice administered by judges selected under local authority rather than by Federal appointees;

"6. The right to freedom from overlapping of Federal and local authority;

"7. The right to an equal share on a per capita basis in Federal grants for education, health, highways, and other public improvements; and

"8. The right to a voice in any proposed amendment of the Federal Constitution, as well as on the taxes which the people of the Territory must pay."

As President Eisenhower said in his first state of the Union message on February 2, 1953, enactment of the legislation before you to grant statehood to Hawaii is appropriate because "the people of that Territory have earned that status."

And this fact also should not be forgotten: at the time Hawaii was made an incorporated Territory, Congress was given an opportunity to declare that such action did not carry with it a pledge of statehood. On April 6, 1900, when the House debated S. 222, "A Bill to Provide a Civil Government for Hawaii," Congressman Ebenezer J. Hill offered the following amendment:

"SEC. 105. Nothing in this Act shall be construed, taken, or held to imply a pledge or promise that the Territory will at any future time be admitted as a State or attached to any State."

Mr. Hill said, defending this amendment:

"No harm whatever can come from the passage of the amendment I have just offered. It commits Congress to nothing. It simply says that this bill and the admission of this Territory shall not be taken or construed as a pledge for the admission of the Territory to statehood either in the immediate or the distant future."

"MR. CANNON. Whether the amendment be adopted or not, is there anything in this bill which commits the Congress of the United States or the people of the country to admit this Territory to statehood?

"MR. HILL. I think there is, so far as the sentimental side of the question is concerned. The American people look upon the authorization and full organization of a Territory as the first step toward statehood. It has always been so construed: it always will be so construed. By the adoption of this amendment we shall simply put ourselves on record as declaring that this legislation is not adopted with that end in view."

A similar amendment presented to the Senate during debate on the same bill was not considered because of a point of order. The House amendment was defeated. While it was ably pointed out by Congressman John S. Williams of Mississippi that the amendment was either unnecessary because it could easily be repealed, or unconstitutional if every territory was "necessarily in process of formation for statehood," the very fact that the gentleman from Connecticut proposed the amendment demonstrates that, prior to the annexation of Hawaii, no territory had been acquired by the United States, the manifest destiny of which was not to become a State.

We are dedicated as a Nation to the principles of self-determination and self-government. Admission of Hawaii to the Union will demonstrate to the people of the Pacific and the world that--regardless of race, color, or creed--citizens of the United States, when they inhabit an incorporated Territory which has political and economic maturity, will be accorded all the privileges of citizenship.

Our report on S. 50 is before you. In it we have suggested some technical amendments. The personnel of the Department are at your disposal and will be pleased to supply any information or assistance you may desire.

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