

Excerpts of Quotations Regarding Hawaiian Homesteading

Prince Kūhiō vs. Governor Frear

Report of Delegate Kalanianaʻole to the Territorial Legislature of Hawai'i, 1912

I myself have been supported by the plantations in my candidacy for Delegate in the past elections, but I have also been supported of their free will by the mass of voters at large. I had hoped until recently that those in control of the industrial system of Hawaii would of their own motion and by the pressure of changed conditions conform to the new demand upon them, and that their protestations of good will to homesteads and a permanent home population would result in an up-building and success of a movement to secure such results; but successful homesteading is confessedly at a standstill in Hawaii today, and the true attitude of the local administration and the plantations today seems to be that they want homesteads to succeed, if they can succeed so as not to disturb them or their profits, or their domination over affairs, which in its final analysis, to all practical purposes, means that they do not want homesteads at all or a population attached to the soil. Under these conditions and with no promise even of a change for the better in the future, I do not care to run again as Delegate, relying upon or asking for the support of the local administration or plantation interests. If I consented to do so, I feel that the people at large, who are looking for some relief in the premises, would repudiate me, and I would have to be a party to an extensive, coercive and money-spending campaign on the part of the plantations to secure reelection. I do not care to run under such conditions and upon such terms. ¹

From September 9, through October 2, 1912, U.S. Secretary of Interior Fisher conducted hearings to investigate the charges raised by Prince Kūhiō against Governor Frear. In the final analysis, Kūhiō, Fisher, and even Frear, acknowledged that the problems raised and identified by Kūhiō were real. They reached the conclusion, however, that the problems were inherent under the political economic structure of the Territory, which was dependent upon the sugar industry and controlled by the sugar factors. Thus, Governor Frear, himself, was exonerated of any malicious wrongdoing. Instead he was guilty of failing to disassociate himself from the sugar oligarchy and challenge their political and economic control.

The domination of Hawaii by the sugar plantations, which are in turn directly controlled by the sugar agencies in Honolulu, has been progressing and extending throughout the Governor's administration, and this fact has been winked at, certainly not challenged, by Governor Frear, and in this respect, his public utterances and written reports in reference to industrial conditions in Hawaii, claiming satisfactory progress in the development of this Territory are misleading and offer cogent proof of this, that the Governor either cannot see or refuses to see that while there is great, in fact too much, wealth concentrated and concentrating in the industrial corporations of Hawaii, and in the hands of a few men that control them, the population at large was never relatively shorter in its supply of independent land and home-owning citizens.

The vital trouble is that the people who control the industrial life of Hawaii have become so blinded by long continued prosperity and the habit of controlling everything from their own standpoint that they, themselves, do not realize how deadly that policy is to the ultimate welfare of the Territory.

Governor Frear is a party (conceded a very respectable party) to this system, and in the final analysis and at heart is in sympathy with its perpetuation. He would like to have homesteads, he would like to have many small independent homes, but is not sufficiently in earnest about it to cut loose from the old policies and perquisites and to leave the industrial system of Hawaii to reform itself so that small homes and holdings may become a beneficiary and necessary part of that system, as it does in the industrial life of every well-ordered State.”

Excerpt from Letter Circulated by Prince Kūhiō to the U.S. Senate:

Prince Kūhiō described the decline of the Hawaiian people and how rehabilitation would reverse the problem in a letter that he circulated in the Senate:

The Hawaiian Race is fast becoming a minority element among the races of the Territory. The mortality rate among the Hawaiians is exceedingly high as compared to the other races and if conditions exist as they do today the Race will become extinct in a very short period of time.

After extensive investigation and survey on the part of various organizations organized for the purpose of rehabilitating the race, it was found that the only method in which to rehabilitate the race was to place them back upon the soil. The Hawaiians were a seafaring and agricultural people. Their entire life was spent in the outdoors. But with the coming of civilization conditions were changed, the Hawaiians on account of their lack of business experience, and otherwise, were forced into the crowded tenements of the cities and towns and were subjected to all the evils of modern civilization. Disease and the change in their living conditions weakened their vitality to such an extent that today they are susceptible to all diseases and their resistance being very low the death rate is high. Under the provisions of this bill, by placing the Hawaiians upon the soil, away from the cities and towns, it is certain that they will again retain their former vitality and in the course of years the race will increase, and become a majority element in the land of their birth. ³

Speech About the Rehabilitation Bill - Hawaiian Homes Commission Bill

In a speech by Prince Kūhiō to Hawaiians in Kaka'ako about the Rehabilitation Bill, he described some of the problems of poor Hawaiian families in Honolulu tenement districts and his hope to rehabilitate them by returning them to the land:

When Captain Cook first landed on these Islands there were 400,000 Hawaiians; when the missionaries came here, a hundred years ago, there were 120,000, and after the lapse of a century we find only 20,000 Hawaiians left. The board of health records show us that the death rate among the Hawaiians is higher than that of any other race here. The race is dying out, and something must be done to rehabilitate it.

I introduced this bill to set aside for the Hawaiian people lands that originally belonged to the Hawaiians. We find that the people who live in the tenement houses in this city are nearly all Hawaiians. Maybe we will be able to get them to go back to the land and rehabilitate the race.

These Hawaiian families living in the tenements are poor, they do not own an inch of land in their own country. The majority of their children are feeble-minded, so the board of education experts tell us they are poor in mind, spirit and industry, because they live in tenements. In the morning their mothers send them to the little Chinese coffee shops to buy coffee - I hate to think what kind of coffee they get there - poor bread and stinking butter. This is their food. How can they grow up robust and healthy and survive? That is why the race is fast dying out. These conditions stare the Hawaiian people in the face.⁴

"Statement by the Legislative Commission of Hawaii in Support of a Bill Providing for the Setting Apart of Portions of the Public Lands of the Territory of Hawaii for Use by Hawaiian Citizens of Hawaiian Blood, Honolulu, January 1, 1920. "

The tenement issue formed a large part of the basic argument in favor of the "rehabilitation" bill submitted to the U.S. Congress in 1920. The commission of the Territorial Legislature acting in support of providing public lands for use by Hawaiians included the following appeal to remove the Hawaiians from the tenements:

While tenement house conditions in Honolulu and elsewhere in the Territory are no worse, and are probably better than in most large cities on the mainland, yet those conditions at their best are fatal to Hawaiians and together with various diseases which have been introduced in the islands by the white man, have resulted in a very great diminution in the population of the Hawaiian race. . . . it is evident that the decrease has been enormous, and that unless something be done to restore these Hawaiian citizens to normal, decent, and healthful conditions, this fine race of people will soon be entirely exterminated.

It is believed that the most practicable way to rehabilitate these people is to get them out of the tenements and back to the land under such conditions as will prohibit them from disposing of the fee or any such interest as may be allotted to them for their use. It is to be understood that the primary object of this proposal is the rehabilitation of the race. Apart from the question of justice

to the Hawaiians, so far as they have not had justice with respect to the original division of the lands, it is the sincere desire of the people of the Territory as expressed through the legislature, to work out some method whereby the Hawaiian people may be induced to leave the tenements and to return to clean, healthful, and decent surroundings under such restrictions and conditions as will tend to encourage them to become independent and contented tillers of the soil. ⁵

Original Wording of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act

WHEREAS, the distribution of lands under the Kingdom of Hawaii, whereby the power to alienate the same has resulted in the loss to the Hawaiian people of a large part of their original birthright so that the members of the race now constitute a large part of the floating population crowding into the congested tenement districts of the larger towns and cities of the Territory under conditions which will inevitably result in the extermination of the race; and

WHEREAS, members of the Hawaiian race or blood should be encouraged to return to the status of independent and contented tillers of the soil, preserving to posterity the valuable and sturdy traits of the race, peculiarly adapted to the islands comprising the Territory of Hawaii, inhabited and governed by peoples of their race and blood as their birthright for a long period of time prior to annexation with the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, there is now available or soon to become available large tracts of public lands under the control of the United States of America from which suitable areas could readily be set aside permanently as government lands subject to long term leases and renewals of leases for the encouragement of associations or colonies of individuals of Hawaiian blood for mutual growth and help to bring a rehabilitation of their race and to furnish an incentive for the preservation of the best characteristics of an independent citizenship of Hawaiian blood;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: by the Senate of the Legislature of the Territory of Hawaii, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Congress of the United States of America be respectfully petitioned herein to make such amendments to the Organic Act of the Territory of Hawaii, or by other provisions deemed proper in the premises, that from time to time there may be set aside suitable portions of the public lands of the Territory of Hawaii by allotments to or for associations, settlements, or individuals of Hawaiian blood in whole or in part, the fee simple title of such lands to remain in the government, but the use thereof to be available under such restrictions as to improvements, size of lots, occupation and otherwise as may be provided for said purposes by a commission duly authorized or otherwise giving preference rights in such homestead leases for the purposes hereof as may be deemed just and suitable by the Congress assembled;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be engrossed for presentation by the Delegate of the Territory of Hawaii to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the President of the United States.⁶

Memorial of Ahahui Puuhonua o na Hawai'i to U.S. Congress

The Ahahui Pu'uhonua O Na Hawai'i explained the rationale for their proposal in a memorial to Congress. It was a blend of traditional concepts about the intimate and interdependent relationship of Hawaiians with the land; and modern notions about agricultural technology and capital investment.

There must be land legislation to enable the race to secure more land than it has in order to substantiate its earthly existence and to establish more than ever before, its rightful claim to the land of its birth. In addition to this project, capital must be furnished to enable the people to care for their lands in a fruitful manner. Experts in agriculture must be furnished them in order to guide the people's agriculture activities along productive and progressive lines. . . .

The soil is a redeeming factor in the life of any race, and our plan for the rehabilitation of the Hawaiians is futile unless the question of returning to mother earth takes precedence to all other considerations in such a plan. . . . Therefore, the question of rehabilitation of the Hawaiian people, not only on the basis of education, but on their direct contact with mother earth, is paramount at this moment.

In so far as experience has proven and as much as science has revealed, physical health and vigor, the power to propagate the race, eradication of diseases, the restoration of normal domestic living conditions, the elimination of poverty and pauperism, the establishment of business relationship with the business world, the deepened appreciation of the soil and of the material wealth, - all of these benefits come, not by the fashionable [sic] life of this century, but, by the intimate acquaintance with the life and the possibilities of the soil. ⁷

U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Territories, 66th Congress 2nd Session. Report No. 839, p.4.

In citing the committee's findings, as to the reasons why the program was needed, the Committee report quoted the testimony of John Wise and John Lane, Secretary of Interior. Their testimonies explained the urgent need to restore Hawaiians to the land and the trust responsibility that the U.S. assumed toward the Hawaiian people:

Mr. WISE. . . The Hawaiian people are a farming people and fishermen, out-of-door people, and when they were frozen out of their lands and driven into the cities they had to live in the cheapest places, tenements. That is one of the big reasons why the Hawaiian people are dying. Now, the only way to save them, I contend, is to take them back to the lands and give them the mode of living that their ancestors were accustomed to and in that way rehabilitate them. We are not only asking for justice in the matter of division of the lands, but we are asking that the great people of the United States should pause for one moment and, instead of giving all your help to Europe, give some help to the Hawaiians and see if you can not rehabilitate this noble people.

Secretary LANE. One thing that impressed me there was the fact that the natives of the islands, who are our wards, I should say, and for whom in a sense we are trustees, are falling off rapidly in numbers and many of them are in poverty. They never owned the land of the islands. The land was owned by the King originally, and they had in 1848 what they called a mahele, in which

there was a division. As a result of that and legislation that passed subsequently, we have approximately 1,600,000 acres of public lands in the islands. . . .

In my judgement, from the limited knowledge I have of the history of the islands, those people, the natives, were not treated fairly in the division of the lands that was made in 1848. At any rate, they are a problem now and they ought to be cared for by being provided with homes out of the public lands; but homes that they could not mortgage and could not sell. They are a most lovable people a kindly people, and a generous people. They have arts of their own which endear them to the people who visit the islands. It is not altogether the beauty of the islands that attracts people there. It is the spirit that they see and the old civilization that they meet. There is a thriftlessness among those people that is characteristic among peoples that are raised under a communist or feudal system. They do not know what the competitive system is and they will get rid of property that is given them. They do not look forward. They can not see to-morrow. Therefore, they should be given as close identification with their country as is possible and yet be protected against their own thriftlessness and against the predatory nature of those who wish to take the land from them.⁸

By incorporating these testimonies into their report as background to the bill, the House Committee on Territories accepted the notion that the U.S. Congress had a trust responsibility to the Hawaiian people as wards. The committee report also recognized the special interest of the common Hawaiian people to a third of the lands of the Hawaiian kingdom. :

But having been recognized as owners of a third interest in the lands of the kingdom, the common people, believing that in the future means were to be adopted to place them in full possession of these lands, assumed that the residue was being held in trust by the Crown for their benefit. However, the lands were never conveyed to the common people and, after a successful revolution, were arbitrarily seized, and by an article in the Hawaiian constitution became the public lands of the Republic of Hawaii. ⁹

¹ P.C.A. October 19, 1912, p. 4.

² P.C.A. September 8, 1912, p. 1

³ Hawai'i State Archives, Delegate Kalaniana'ole File.

⁴ P.C.A. September 24, 1920, p. 1.

⁵ Hawai'i State Archives, Delegate Kalaniana'ole File on Rehabilitation, "Statement by the Legislative Commission of Hawaii in Support of a Bill Providing for the Setting Apart of Portions of the Public Lands of the Territory of Hawaii for Use by Hawaiian Citizens of Hawaiian Blood, Honolulu, January 1, 1920. "

⁶ Hawai'i State Archives, Delegate Kalaniana'ole File on Rehabilitation, "Statement by the Legislative Commission of Hawaii in Support of a Bill Providing for the Setting Apart of Portions of the Public Lands of the Territory of Hawai'i for Use by Hawaiian Citizens of Hawaiian Blood, Honolulu, January 1, 1920".

⁷ Hawai'i State Archives, Delegate Kalaniana'ole File, "Memorial to Congress from the Ahahui Pu'uuhonua O Na Hawai'i."

⁸ Hawai'i State Archives, Delegate Kalaniana'ole File on Rehabilitation, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Territories, 66th Congress 2nd Session. Report No. 839, p.4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5. This analysis of the Crown lands having been held in trust by the common people by the monarchy was also described by Prince Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole in an article in the *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, 21 (February 1921), p. 126. He wrote the following: "This board [Board of Commissioners to Quiet Land Titles] decided that there were but three classes of vested or original rights in the land, which were in the kingdom or Government, the chiefs, and the common people, and these three classes of interest were about equal in extent. The common people being left out in the division after being recognized as owners of a third interest in the kingdom, believing that new methods had to be adopted to place them in possession, assumed that these lands were being held in trust by the crown for their benefit. However, the lands were not reconveyed to the common people, and it was so held by each monarch from the time of the division in 1848 to the time of the dethronement of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893."