

HAWAII LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

1932 - 1933

The Hawaii Legislative Commission was an action body evolving from a series of events which threatened to bring about drastic changes in the legal structure of the Territory. In the latter part of 1931 and early 1932, events accompanying two related local crimes resulted in considerable notoriety and hysteria on the U.S. Mainland. Laxity in the local law enforcement machinery was associated with political interference. Acting upon U.S. Senate Resolution No. 134, the Assistant U.S. Attorney General, Seth Richardson, headed an investigating committee which studied the Hawaiian situation and reported in April, 1932. Based upon this report, some 11 bills were introduced in the Senate which aimed to tighten Federal controls in the Territory and curtail many basic rights guaranteed by the Organic Act. Two special sessions of the Territorial Legislature were called in 1932 for the chief purpose of passing remedial legislation designed to correct the weaknesses formerly extant in the Territorial law enforcement machinery.

The first special session established a Joint Legislative Committee by House Concurrent Resolutions Nos. 11 and 14 directing the Committee to study the Richardson Report and make recommendations to the Legislature. It was empowered to compel the attendance of witnesses at hearings and engage any stenographic or clerical help necessary. A sub-committee canvassed public opinion by sending out 600 questionnaires and copies of the bills introduced in the U.S. Senate and calling representative citizens before them in open hearings and obtaining statements. The Committee reported through its Chairman, Roy A. Vitousek, to the 2nd Special Session on June 3, 1932.

Also on June 3, 1932, Act 71 was passed and approved. This act created a Legislative Commission empowered to assist the Delegate to Congress in preparing, compiling, and furnishing information, statistics and other data for presentation of Hawaii's position on matters pending before Congress or any other matters which might arise before the advent of the next Legislative session. The Commission of five was to be composed of the Governor, Lawrence M. Judd, and four others to be appointed by him. The Governor was Chairman, ex-officio, and the Commission was to meet at his call. It was authorized to go to Washington upon the written request of the Delegate and assist him during the hearings before the Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs. The sum of \$15,000 was appropriated from general revenues to cover the expenses of the Commission and the cost of clerical, legal and other assistance.

Governor Judd first appointed an Advisory Committee on matters referred to in Act 71. Members were: J.L. Coke, William H. Heen, W.B. Pittman, H.R. Hewitt, A.G.M. Robertson, A.G. Smith, Roy A. Vitousek, A. Akana, and C.A. Rice. Raymond C. Brown was elected Vice-President of the Committee and Lt. Col. Walter R. Dunham as Secretary. The membership was later expanded to include three members from the Chamber of Commerce with three Committee members in the formation of a special sub-committee to work out plans for a publicity campaign on the Mainland. The Chamber of Commerce agreed to advance the sum of \$1,500 for expenses and hiring of a Publicity Director, J.R. Farrington. The money was to be replaced from the appropriation made for the Legislative Commission at such time as it was formed. The Advisory Committee met from August 29 to November 10, 1932 and prepared most of the material which was later used by the Legislative Commission.

November 21, 1932, the Hawaii Legislative Commission held its first meeting and incorporated the records of the Joint Legislative Committee and the Advisory Committee. Members were: James L. Coke, Wallace R. Farrington, A.G.M. Robertson, John H. Wilson, and the Chairman, Governor Judd. J.R. Farrington was appointed as Special Writer and Mrs. R.D. Johnson as Stenographer. Steps taken to combat the "Richardson Bills" involved assembling and circulating correct information about the Islands, enlisting community support of efforts made to cope with the bills obtaining all available information and drafting appropriate arguments bearing upon the questions raised, and preparing a comprehensive brief setting forth the position of the Territory on Senate Bills Nos. 4309, 4310, 4311, 4312, 4314, 4315, and 4374 and 4375, which were then pending in the Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs, U.S. Senate. The Commission submitted its brief to Delegate V.S.K. Houston on January 3, 1933, setting forth its position on the Bills and including a considerable body of supplementary data in support of its stand. Discussion of remedial legislation enacted by the Territorial Legislature during the two special sessions and the report of the Joint Legislative Committee were included in the brief.

Hearings were subsequently held on January 16, 1933, the brief submitted and the bills allowed to die in Committee. The Commission formally dissolved on January 31, 1933 and Governor Judd received and approved the minutes of February 2, 1933.

These records include the following:

- Com 17 vol 1
- Com 17-1
- The brief submitted to Delegate Houston in pamphlet form.
 - Folder #1 - Minutes of the Governor's Advisory Committee on matters referred to in Act 71, 2nd Special Session Laws 1932; August 29, 1932 - November 10, 1932.
 - Folder #2 - Minutes of Hawaii Legislative Commission, November 21, 1932-January 31, 1933.
 - Folder #3 - Copies of Commission material, communications and report to 17th Legislature, T.H. dated February 16, 1933.
 - Folder #4 - Correspondence between Commission and Delegate Houston.
 - Folder #5 - Correspondence received - alphabetically arranged.
 - Folder #6 - Correspondence dispatched - alphabetically arranged.
 - Folder #7 - Senate Bills.
 - Folder #8 - Memorandums and Bibliography.
 - Folder #9 - Correspondence and Reports.
 - Folder #10- Reports
 - Folder #11- Reports
 - Folder #12-Resolutions from Community Groups.
 - Folder #13-Miscellaneous material.
 - Folder #14-Publicity--typewritten copies.
 - Folder #15-Thurston-Dole excerpts by Andrew Farrell.
 - Folder #16-Kuykendal excerpts from records in Public Archives.

See Also: Governor's files - Drawer 45
Newspaper files
Government Publications