

## Joseph James Fern, Honolulu's First Mayor

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The beginnings of chartered local government were long-delayed in Hawaii. Counties and municipalities were never set up under the monarchy, despite several attempts, and only under some pressure from Congress did the first set of county governments begin to operate in 1905. Then, in 1907, the Territorial legislature, recognizing the special nature of Honolulu's municipal problems, created a combined city-county government to commence operating in January 1909. The following account of the first years of that regime is based on a history of the City and County of Honolulu commissioned by the City Council and still in process of editorial preparation.

On January 4, 1909, Joseph James Fern was sworn into office as the first mayor of the City and County of Honolulu. The setting was the McIntyre building at Fort and King Streets, and the newly re-christened "City and County Band," under Captain Henry Berger, played a march specially composed for the occasion and dedicated to the mayor. Leis were presented, speeches were delivered, and the first signs of political discord appeared.

The *Advertiser*, which had opposed creation of the new government and lamented Fern's narrow electoral victory, headlined the event "A Day of Official Burlesque." Its lead article ridiculed the mayor's inaugural address, describing him as stumbling over the difficult words and mispronouncing others. In the editor's view Joe Fern was manifestly unfit for the office he now held and represented a whole class of incompetents who had favored creation of the City-County government merely as a means of getting on its payroll.<sup>1</sup>

The voters had spoken, however, and by a margin of seven votes, won in a last-minute ethnic appeal in Palama and Kakaako, *Keo Kimo Pana*, as his Hawaiian admirers called him, was mayor. He set out purposefully to put together an administration and a program, and he called upon the supervisors for support. For the next decade Joe Fern would be a central figure in Honolulu politics.

Joseph James Fern was a native of Kohala, born there on September 25,

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1872, to James and Kaipō Fern, a Hawaiian family in humble circumstances. He once remarked that he was a Hawaiian who had never learned to swim, because he spent his youth in the mountains of Kohala and never reached the shore, even of the Big Island, until he was eighteen. His schooling was rudimentary at best, and he was commonly referred to as self-taught. At the age of twelve he went to work for the Union Mill Plantation of Kohala, driving a bullock cart loaded with fire wood from the forests on the upper slopes down to the mill.

According to one account Fern became a luna for Union Mill before leaving the island of Hawaii about 1892 to seek his fortune in Honolulu. In the city his first job was as a mule-car driver with Hawaiian Tramways Company, Ltd. Two years later he was employed on the Honolulu docks by the Wilder Steamship Company, where he rose to the position of shipping master. When the Wilder and Inter-Island steamship companies were merged, Fern continued as shipping master and was still employed by Inter-Island when his political career began in 1907.<sup>2</sup>

Fern was thrice-married, his first bride, Julia Natua, presenting him with two children, Julia and James, before her death, and his second wife, Sheba Alapai, giving birth to twelve, Joseph Jr., Mary K., Nancy, George, Kaipō, Elizabeth, Marion, Mary, Keo, Santa Clara, Henry, and Esta. Sheba died in April 1910. His third wife, Emma Silva, married Fern in August 1910 in Honolulu, when he was already mayor of the city. The family lived at that time in a home at 931 Alapai Lane, in Palama. The following year the mayor purchased the residence of "the late Captain Ross" at Paki and Monsarrat in Waikiki, and the Ferns lived there until some time in 1916 or 1917, when they returned to the Alapai Lane home.<sup>3</sup>

In 1907 Joe Fern was elected to the Board of Supervisors of the County of Oahu as a Democrat, one of a minority of three on the seven-man board. A friendly, outgoing man, Fern had not hesitated to share what he had, in the Hawaiian fashion, as his fortunes improved. He was active in civic club fraternal organization affairs, and in general his popularity in the Hawaiian community made him an excellent political recruit for the Democrats. He was said to be able to converse in Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese, as well as in Hawaiian and English, a legacy from his early employment in a multi-ethnic working force.<sup>4</sup>

Joe Fern's first and only term as an Oahu supervisor appears to have been relatively uneventful. Supervisors' records indicate his quite regular attendance at meetings, but he seems not to have played a particularly prominent role, at least not enough to attract much newspaper attention. For that reason his emergence in 1909 as his party's candidate for mayor is something of a surprise. There were others who had more political experience than he and might logically have been candidates.

One account states that Fern had had no intention of running for mayor until Prince Kuhio made a strong "*Nana Ka Ili*" (ethnically slanted) speech in the Republican Territorial Convention of 1908. Then Fern set out, on the Democrats' behalf, to find a *haole* candidate for the mayor's job, a post newly

created by the 1907 legislature. But the act which created the City-County of Honolulu provided a salary of only \$250 per month for the mayor and carried with it a stipulation that the holder of the office should not be in private business at the same time. This apparently discouraged most of the possible candidates whom Fern approached, and so he decided to run himself.

The account cited above, an *Advertiser* article printed just after Fern's death in 1920, also claimed that the Republican-dominated Territorial legislature had passed the City-County "charter" in 1907 because the Republicans expected to elect as mayor Oahu Senator John Lane, who had played a major role in shepherding the bill through the legislature. But D. P. R. Isenberg and Supervisors Charles Hustace and John Lucas were also spoken of as possible Republican candidates before Lane, strongly backed by the St. Louis College alumni, won the role.<sup>5</sup>

At one point it seemed that the 1908 campaign might produce a four-sided race for City-County offices. In addition to the regular Republican and Democratic slates, the Independent, or Home-Rule, Party put up a partial list of candidates, and a new "Labor Party," the creation of the colorful Senator W. C. "Charley" Achi, also entered the race. Before election day the Labor Party and the Independents formed a fusion ticket, headed by Achi but also endorsing some strong Republican incumbents.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to Republican disunity, the Democrats seemed fairly united, though over-all party strength appeared low except in pockets of the Fifth District, west of Nuuanu.

Newspaper reporting on the 1908 campaign seemed to show less outright appeal to ethnic prejudice than had been common in earlier election years, though notable exceptions could be shown. Joseph J. Fern, for example, made a last-minute campaign whirl directed almost solely toward Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian voters. It may have worked, for he was elected mayor by a margin of seven votes, when earlier estimates had given him little chance at all.<sup>7</sup>

With all the emotion and excitement of the campaign, the fabled spirit of aloha was then much in evidence at the colorful election rallies. "Musical quintet clubs" were in vogue at the time, and bands, hula dancers, torchlight processions and even movies contributed to the gaiety. Speeches were given mainly in English and Hawaiian, but to certain audiences short speeches in Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, and even Spanish were offered as proof of the cosmopolitan sympathies of the candidates, and Fern shone on such occasions.

One of the most enthusiastic and heavily attended rallies was held near the end of the campaign at the Haleiwa Hotel. Hundreds of voters were picked up along the way by a special train from Honolulu, and more were brought from the other end of the rail line, from Kahana, Punaluu, Hauula, and Laie.

The morning after the election the *Advertiser* headlined "Lane Mayor of Honolulu." The next day the main heading read "Final Count Shows Majority for Fern." Late returns, particularly from Kakaako and Pauoa, with a boost from Palama, had wiped out a majority which Republican John C. Lane had held from the early returns. There was talk of a recount, or an

attempt to disqualify some Democrat voters as illegally registered, but Lane wanted none of it.<sup>8</sup>

Charges of irregularities at the polling places were raised, however, and a suit was brought demanding a recount of the votes. The Territorial Supreme Court rejected the suit in late December on grounds which, according to the *Bulletin*, seemed to preclude "all possibility of the people knowing whether the irregularities charged are true and whether Mayor Fern was counted in by improper methods or all but counted out by the same route." And so Honolulu's first mayoral campaign was over. Lane reported the highest personal campaign expenses, \$785.25; his victorious rival, Fern, reported spending only \$125.00.<sup>9</sup>

With his election Joseph J. Fern became the central figure in Honolulu's municipal politics, and he remained pretty much in that position for the rest of his life. He proved to be a colorful, sympathetic figure to all but his most diehard opponents, and even they had to give grudging admiration to the man, if not to the office-holder. Relying heavily on the Hawaiian vote, Fern was a thorn in the flesh of the very conservative wing of the Republican organization, and their newspaper voices, the *Gazette* and *Advertiser*, repeatedly ridiculed his behavior in office and cast doubt upon his qualification for it.

Joe Fern's identification with the Hawaiian community, still the largest ethnic bloc of voters at that time, was not a mere matter of opportunism. He had been active in Hawaiian civic groups for some years, and the *Bulletin* in 1910 credited him with often spending his own funds and energies to relieve the distress of poor Hawaiians.<sup>10</sup>

Fern's warm sympathy for his people was shared by others in the City-County administration, and it bore political fruit in the dominance of Hawaiians on the public payrolls as well as in a strong ethnic vote for favored candidates. One result was the growth of the *hui* in public office. These groups of political friends and allies, clustered about a beneficent appointing or supervising official, seemed to have more cohesion than regular political party organizations. In this the *hui* represented patterns of loyalty long familiar in Hawaiian life. They gave a degree of human warmth to government agencies and functions that mere statutes could not create.

At the same time, the *hui* system, if it can be called that, served as a shelter for incompetence and even dishonesty in the performance of City-County work, as the years were to show repeatedly. The *hui* was also an obstacle to the growth of a professional civil service or even to long-range planning of public improvements.

At the other extreme, politically, from Fern was an active minority of Honolulu's citizens concerned with honesty and "businesslike efficiency" in government and generally critical of Fern's policies and practices. Overwhelmingly haole, Caucasian, with a small admixture of Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians, this "oligarchy" was generally well-to-do by local standards, well-educated, supremely self-confident, and self-righteous.

This "oligarchy" was never as united in its views and interests as its critics

pretended, nor so narrowly self interested. Its interest in the wave of municipal reform then sweeping the nation consistently looked toward expert management rather than toward wider democratic participation. Publicly, this group would appear to have shown less concern for the welfare of most of Honolulu's people than did the men in office. Privately, their benefactions supported most of the city's charitable organizations.

Even before Fern's election as mayor the *Advertiser* had been calling for amendment of the new Municipal Act. The editor complained, "As it now stands, it comes dangerously near bidding for a Mayor who is either an incompetent or a rascal. . . ." The same theme was taken up after the election by Robert W. Shingle, a conservative just elected to the Territorial House of Representatives. Shingle announced his intention to submit bills abolishing the mayor's salary and doing away with the requirement that the mayor must withdraw from private business activities while in office. Taken together these two changes might have made it all but impossible for someone like Joe Fern to hold the office and would have favored one of the well-to-do business or professional types.<sup>11</sup>

After the election, in an editorial reflecting its dissatisfaction, the *Advertiser* returned to the old theme that the new municipal government was simply a farce, trying to create democratic government where most of the voters really needed to *be* governed and had no capacity to rule. Local government under these conditions, the editorial continued, merely increased expenses and gave proof of the incompetence of many in office to perform the duties assigned them. The mayor himself, it concluded, couldn't pass a civil service test for customs house weigher, and some of the supervisors were not capable of serving as helpers. The *Advertiser* despaired of democratic government, again.<sup>12</sup>

The keynote of Mayor Fern's inaugural address was harmony, as well it might be when he faced a Republican Board of Supervisors. But the Mayor could scarcely have expected to achieve that harmony when he began his administration by unilaterally appointing office-holders to City and County jobs all the way down to the laborer level. When the board objected to this, pointing out that many of these jobs were already filled, the Mayor insisted that the new charter gave him the general appointing power, not just that relating to positions specified in the Municipal Act itself. The board then saw that the question was taken to court for resolution.<sup>13</sup>

In March 1909, the Territorial Supreme Court decided in favor of a broad interpretation of the Mayor's appointive power, but by that time a scene of almost hopeless confusion had been created. When the supervisors refused to appropriate funds for his appointees, the Mayor vetoed their appropriation measure. This brought municipal government to a nearly complete halt, and Mayor Fern was obliged to reverse his policy. Then for a time some City and County jobs were filled simultaneously by two office-holders. This was particularly ludicrous, and common, at the laborer level. Eventually, Fern's appointees were paid out of City and County funds, while the Territorial Legislature was obliged to pass a special appropriation in the 1909 session to pay the rest.<sup>14</sup>

Where the mayor's appointive power required the approval of the Board of Supervisors, as it did in a few cases, a fertile source of bickering developed. This remained an area for trials of strength between mayor and board for half a century, producing another temporary impasse as late as the administration of Neal Blaisdell in 1955. It is of at least passing interest that one of the appointments on which Mayor Fern was victorious was that of John H. Wilson (later mayor) as road supervisor for the Honolulu district.

This stormy attempt to work out a definition of political roles in Honolulu's new frame of government was paralleled by more legislative action. The legislature of 1909 spent a remarkable amount of time on the problems of local government in Hawaii in general and Honolulu in particular. The Honolulu Board of Supervisors that year created a legislative committee to protect and advance their interests before the territorial lawmakers. Just how influential it was is impossible to determine, but the 1909 legislature granted greatly increased powers and responsibilities to local officials, some of which those officers were not ready to exercise.<sup>15</sup>

Incorporation of the City and County brought a round of jurisdictional problems, which at times created ridiculous situations. The mattresses and blankets used by jail inmates, for example, were judged to be still Territorial property, while the jail and its management were now under the City. To make matters worse, the City's jail and the Territorial prison were both housed in the same 1875 building in Iwilei, but the kitchen and laundry were in the Territory's section. Before a separate kitchen and laundry for the Honolulu prisoners could be built, additional land had to be purchased by the City, since the jail yard was too small to accommodate them. Similar confusion attended the transfer of health, water, and sewer properties and functions.<sup>16</sup>

During their two-year term of office, 1909-1911, the first Honolulu Board of Supervisors under the City-County charter enacted twenty ordinances. This was a larger number than the previous boards had passed under the old county charter, probably reflecting the more specific and substantial grants of power made to local government under the Act of 1907. Another factor was the clearer definition of the board's legal powers which had come out of the frequent court tests of the early years.

The first court tests under the 1903 and 1905 charters had dealt largely with the right of the County of Oahu to exist and to legislate at all. By 1909 that point was largely settled, and major attention turned to conflicts of jurisdiction. These were of three kinds: between mayor and board, between City-County and Territory, and between the board's regulatory powers and the rights of private citizens and firms.

One area of controversy centered about the performance of public works. Marston Campbell, who served the Territory as Superintendent of Public Works, head of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, Public Land Commissioner, and Territorial Surveyor, was a frequent participant in Territory-City-County disputes. As Superintendent of Public Works, for example, Campbell issued permits to the gas company to install mains along certain streets in Makiki and Manoa, despite the fact that the City-County owned the

roads in question and held the responsibility for their maintenance. The supervisors had already passed an ordinance regulating the digging-up of roads, yet in 1909 they were engaged in a long, bitter dispute with Mutual Telephone Company officials concerning its enforcement; and now the gas company!<sup>17</sup>

Another problem which continually plagued Honolulu officials, and those of the other counties, was the allotment of public funds between Territorial and local functions. Despite early attempts to place the taxing power at the local level, the Organic Act and legislative jealousy had made the Territory the collector of nearly all revenues. These were then doled out to local governments on the basis of formulas laid down by the legislature. Governor Frear voiced the sentiments of Territorial officials when he said, in 1911, "under present conditions, local government is a sieve for Territorial funds: there is no limit to the amount that can be used or that will be desired."<sup>18</sup> On the other side, City-County officials complained constantly that the funds at their disposal were inadequate for effective carrying out of the functions assigned them by the legislature. And beside that, the Territorial treasury department frequently kept them in the dark as to how much money they would receive, and when. Still, the counties survived and by surviving gained the strength of precedent.

Joe Fern's first term as mayor, then, was still a trying-out time for municipal government, with partisan and factional in-fighting for a background. Neither Fern's Hawaiian supporters nor the "good government" clubs of the haole elite could win control of either political party organization, at least consistently. Yet the latter had better luck on the Territorial level than in Honolulu, where the Republican county committee had been repeatedly at odds with the conservatives through the century's first decade. This uncertain balance of political control carried into the campaign of 1910.

Politicking for the November city elections began early that year. Just after New Year Mayor Fern announced his intention to run for reelection. The *Bulletin*, in carrying this announcement, stated that Fern in 1908 had first offered his candidacy to the Republican convention, and only when rebuffed there had gone over to the Democrats.<sup>19</sup> Among the potential rivals for Fern's position was Supervisor James C. Quinn, head of the Board of Supervisors' influential roads committee, Charles Hustace, Jr., and John C. Lane, all Republicans. No strong Democrat rival was foreseen, nor did one appear during the year, though for months the local press busied itself with rumors of candidacies, conspiracies and alleged "deals." Into this political pot a national issue forced itself in the summer.

Temperance forces were waging an aggressive campaign throughout the nation in 1910, and they succeeded in placing before Congress a measure called the "Curtis Bill," which would have imposed upon Hawaii compulsory prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Hawaii's Delegate to Congress, Jonah Kuhio

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*Mayor Joseph James Fern and family, at home in Alapai Lane, 1909.*  
(Photo courtesy of the Bishop Museum.)







Kalanianaʻole, warned Congress that such an action would be an affront to the Hawaiian people, and he was supported by Democrat W. C. McClellan, a supervisor who was in Washington at the critical moment.<sup>20</sup>

Sensitivity on the question of home rule, rather than Prohibition itself, apparently accounted for this resolute opposition. As a result, Congress passed instead a measure ordering a plebiscite on Prohibition in Hawaii, to be held in the summer of 1910. A vigorous campaign took place before the vote, held on July 26, with most of the agitation, according to the newspapers, directed toward the Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian majority of the electorate.

A People's Prohibition Party, composed mostly of prominent haole citizens, combined forces with a Hawaiian Temperance Prohibition Party. A number of socially prominent ladies, headed by Mrs. Walter F. Frear, proposed pre-plebiscite straw vote on the Prohibition issue, apparently in hope of involving the question of woman suffrage as well. There was even a petition to Congress to allow women to vote in this plebiscite. The straw ballot, in the end, was abandoned, partly on the advice of Prohibitionist John G. Wooley and others, who warned that combining the two questions might confuse the issue to the detriment of both causes. The ladies, however, through the W.C.T.U. and other organized activities, continued to play an active role in the campaign.<sup>21</sup>

The *Advertiser* spoke ominously of a "liquor interest," said to be spending large sums to influence voters. More important to the anti-Prohibition cause was the fact that the measure placed before the electorate did not call for complete Prohibition, but merely the outlawing of local production and sale of "spirituous, vinous, and malt liquors except for medicinal and scientific purposes." As Lincoln L. McCandless pointed out, this would discriminate against the poor man who could not afford to import his liquor, while the rich could continue to purchase on the Mainland all they chose to bring into the Territory. J. M. Poepoe advocated complete Prohibition of the manufacture, sale, possession, or consumption of alcoholic beverages. H. M. Kaniho, declared that it wasn't Prohibition that the Hawaiians needed to preserve the health of their race, it was more food and better incomes. Whether it was the liquor question or some other, the *Advertiser* commented that never before had pre-election precinct meetings in Honolulu been so well attended and drawn such large votes for party officers as in May and June, 1910.<sup>22</sup>

In the end the voters of Hawaii defeated the Prohibition measure by a margin of more than three to one. On Oahu the vote was more than four to one. The temperance forces ascribed their defeat to a carefully organized and well-financed campaign mounted by the "liquor interests" with help from the Mainland.<sup>23</sup>

In November 1910, the Republicans were mainly victorious, but Mayor Fern won re-election by a majority of fewer than 100 votes. This touched off a round of furious charges that "ticket-splitters" grudge groups had conspired to "dump" Republican candidate John Lane. The sixth precinct of the fourth representative district, Kakaako, was thought by many to be the area in which the decisive Fern votes were turned in. There was talk of polling irregularities

there and the familiar demand for a recount, which again was turned down by the Supreme Court.<sup>24</sup>

On the new Board of Supervisors which met in 1911 the Republicans enjoyed a 6-1 majority, though a second Democrat, Lester Petrie, barely missed election. Leaders of the major parties called for "unity" in the aftermath of a bitter campaign, and "Link" McCandless announced plans for a gigantic luau in Atkinson Park, to which all voters, including even those who had not voted Democrat, were invited.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of 1911 Governor Frear expressed the view that local government, for better or for worse, was here to stay. He suggested, however, that local elected officials should be reduced in number. He saw no need for the office of mayor, believing that one of the supervisors could be chosen to serve as chairman of that body and thus avoid mayor-board conflicts. Election of such administrative officers as the sheriff, clerk, treasurer, etc., also interfered, in his view, with "efficient" local government. What the Governor was proposing, in brief, was a sort of commission government, but he stopped short, as critics pointed out, of advocating adoption of the initiative, referendum and recall which elsewhere had been deemed essential to popular control over commission members.<sup>26</sup>

Among the measures which failed to receive approval by the Territorial Legislature in 1911 were bills which would have abolished the office of mayor, ended the election of administrative officers, transferred the Honolulu water system to a private corporation, and centralized road supervision under an *elected* superintendent of public streets and highways. The last measure was aimed at the district road supervisors and their endless patronage squabbles and corruption charges.<sup>27</sup>

Many of Hawaii's voters saw in their power to elect as many as possible of their governing officials the only safeguard against domination by a self-perpetuating clique. Prince Kuhio came to a sharp break with Frear over such questions. The Delegate to Congress charged that the Governor had "lost touch with the people," if he had ever had it. The split thus created in Republican ranks eventually helped pave the way for Democrat victories in the 1912 elections.<sup>28</sup>

Feeling that modifications were wiser than radical treatment, the 1911 Territorial lawmakers retained Mayor Fern's office but removed his power of appointment, which, it was alleged, he had used in highly partisan fashion to reward friends regardless of qualifications. For two years the supervisors held the initiative on appointments before the legislature again restored it to the mayor, with board approval. Fern, in 1911, shrewdly consented to the removal of his appointing power, preferring, apparently, to retain the mayor's office at this price. He may also have foreseen the difficulties in which the scramble for city jobs would involve the supervisors.

Charges of petty personal politics arose in 1911-12 over Joe Fern's efforts to keep his friend, John H. Wilson, as Road Supervisor for Honolulu. After one term in 1909-1911 Wilson had become the target of widespread public criticism, some of it undoubtedly partisan in origin. Since it was the

custom then for city officeholders far down the list to be replaced in spoils-system fashion with each change of administration, Wilson's nomination by Fern for a second term in office gave the Republican majority of the board a chance to replace him with a man of their own choice. The *Advertiser* suggested that the job might well be abolished altogether and road construction and maintenance be put under the city engineer's office.<sup>29</sup>

Determined that Wilson be replaced, the supervisors eventually forced Mayor Fern's hand on the appointment, but only after a long and artful battle on the mayor's part, in which he exhausted nearly every possible delaying tactic, political trade-off, and counter-pressure.

As it turned out Wilson was succeeded by E. C. Wilder, and then by several other road supervisors in rapid succession. Clearly there was more than partisan politics in the difficulties of the office. The road department was still a major expender of city funds, yet it was usually short of money to meet the needs of a growing urban community. New residential areas, a demand for the paving of downtown streets, and plantation pressures for better rural roads all affected the department. In the absence of any clear system of priorities, political pressure from community associations, downtown merchants, rural politicians, and gangs of road workers and overseers, who were also voters, determined what roads were built or repaired, and how.

Aroused by the charges of petty politics and inefficient operations in the Fern-administered city government, the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce in 1912 hired a British-born accountant, H. Gooding Field, to conduct an efficiency survey of the city. A fee of \$1,000 was paid Field for his 64-page *Report on the Administrative Organization of the City and County of Honolulu*, submitted on March 30, 1912.

It is not clear whether the Chamber or its president, E.I. Spalding, had consulted the city administration before authorizing Field's study. The chilly response given by supervisors and department heads to Field's assumption that he should have free access to all official records would seem to imply that the way had not been cleared. At any rate, he gained access to a good deal of informative material and on the basis of this, and on what he was told, Field concluded, not surprisingly, that Honolulu's government was inefficiently organized. He proposed several important changes in its structure, which he declared could save the city some \$94,000 annually.<sup>30</sup>

Field insisted that the mayor, instead of being the actual executive head of the city, had now become a holder of a sinecure, a virtual figurehead. He therefore urged that the office be abolished. In its place Field proposed a small board of supervisors of not more than five members, which should really be an executive commission, with one of its members chosen as chairman, or "mayor." Department heads, he insisted, should be appointed by the board on the basis of merit and experience alone.<sup>31</sup>

This accountant's view of civic virtue did not set well with the Board of Supervisors or with many citizens, who saw in the unsolicited activity of the Chamber of Commerce another attempt to wrest authority from the hands of the "people." There was considerable criticism of "Goodie" Field and

the Chamber even before the report was published, and when the old recommendations for commission government emerged there was much shaking of heads at what seemed just another effort to enable the "oligarchy" to control the City-County as it dominated the Territory and the other counties.<sup>32</sup>

Field and those who sympathized with him assumed that the purposes and therefore the methods of a government and of a business were or should be identical. To this view Chief Justice A. G. M. Robertson, for one, objected, pointing out that the aims of the two were different. Mere fiscal economy and operating efficiency in Honolulu's government, he declared, might actually defeat some of the useful purposes being served in the support and political education of its citizens. Robertson also called attention to the relative helplessness of city officers in fiscal affairs when control lay with the Territory's legislators and administrators.<sup>33</sup>

Armed with the recommendations of the Field Report members of the Chamber of Commerce and other Republican business leaders set out to find successful businessmen to run for public office in the fall of 1912. Business ability rather than party loyalty was held to be the most important factor in judging candidates. Fern-type politics must go.

The "businesslike government" campaign quickly ran into obstacles. Few successful businessmen in Honolulu could afford to sacrifice the time from their careers to run for temporary, ill-paid, public posts. More than that, not many of the candidates who appealed to conservative business leaders could seem to generate much enthusiasm among the voters. Several withdrew from the campaign because of the pressure of private affairs or because they had not even been consulted before their names were put up.<sup>34</sup>

The Republicans wound up nominating Samuel Parker to oppose Joe Fern for mayor in 1912. By doing so the party convention offended two prominent former supervisors who had hoped for the chance and had many backers. In addition, Frear-Kuhio split in Republican ranks widened to the point where the Secretary of the Interior was sent to Honolulu from Washington to see what could be done.

The Democrats, too, had factional divisions, but that year they were in better shape than the Republicans and were in a position, at least at the city level, to gain from their opponents' troubles. There also appeared a short-lived Socialist ticket and a longshoremen's *Hui Uniona*, largely Hawaiian in membership, and led by John H. Wilson the former road supervisor. These groups threw their support generally to Democrat candidates.<sup>35</sup>

Joe Fern in 1912 appears to have felt supremely confident of electoral victory, and he spent more time stumping the islands on behalf of Lincoln L. McCandless, the party's candidate for Delegate to Congress, than he seemed to devote to seeking votes for himself. Rumor had it that he would rather have campaigned for Prince Kuhio, McCandless' opponent, and that may explain why, for example, he spent one critical election week on Maui rather than pushing McCandless, the haole candidate, at home. Newspaper gossip said that Fern was doing his campaign work for a substantial fee.<sup>36</sup>

As the campaign wound up with its usual concentration on personalities

and party loyalties, rallies grew in size and on election day rates for rental automobiles to carry candidates around to the voting places rose to \$35 and \$40 a day, so fierce was the competition. The usual battle over the use of the City-County band for the election-eve rally became so intense that a compromise had to be made, allowing band members to attend the rally of their choice. No breakdown of musical attendance, indicating partisan preference, appears to have been made.<sup>37</sup>

In the end, on Oahu the Democrat landslide of 1912 overwhelmed Sam Parker and most other Republican candidates, excepting Prince Kuhio. Not only was Joe Fern returned as mayor, but he won by more than 1,500 votes, and six Democrats were elected supervisors to one lone Republican. Lester Petrie, William H. McClellan, John Markham, Sam Hardesty, Manuel C. Pacheco, and E. H. F. Wolters were the Democrats, Andrew Cox the Republican. William Jarrett was re-elected sheriff, Charles J. McCarthy was the new treasurer, and Republicans John Cathcart, David Kalauokalani, and James Bicknell were attorney, clerk, and auditor, respectively.<sup>38</sup>

Mayor Fern's first message to the new Board of Supervisors at the start of 1913 dealt largely with a sense of impending change and growth. The Panama Canal was nearing completion, and many then expected it to revolutionize trans-Pacific shipping. In addition, military spending at Forts Ruger and Shafter, and at Pearl Harbor was indicating a further source of possible revenues and problems for Honolulu. Fern called again for more fiscal autonomy for the city, for transfer of the waterworks, the sewer system, schools, and major revenue sources. He also proposed construction of a city hall in which the various growing municipal agencies could be housed together instead of being scattered in rented downtown offices. Acquiring land for small parks, playgrounds, and urban breathing space was urgent, declared the mayor, or they would have to be purchased later, at far higher cost.<sup>39</sup>

The legislature that year responded magnificently, though not gratifying all the hopes of the mayor. The appointing power of which he had been stripped in 1911 was now returned. The sewer and water systems were turned over to the City by the Territorial public works department. A frontage tax system was introduced to back up the improvement district law, and greater control over Oahu streets and highways was given to the City. More than two dozen measures touching local government matters passed that session, including creation of a civil service commission for the police and fire departments, authorization of county improvement bonds, and the transfer of Kapiolani Park from Territorial control to the City.<sup>40</sup>

The new Board of Supervisors at first appeared to take a more seriously deliberative approach to its duties than had its predecessors, probably because of the party unity of mayor and board majority. The inherent sources of conflict of interest between mayor and supervisors slowly began to reemerge, however. The supervisors were reluctant to give up power, even to a mayor of the same party, and besides, the Democratic party itself was not without its factions. Mayor Fern had his followers, some of whom were strong supporters also of Prince Kuhio, Clerk David Kalauokalani, and other Republicans of

Hawaiian ancestry. And the supervisors also had friends of their own, as did the elected department heads, whose interest in the City jobs conflicted both with civic economy and with the mayor's patronage interests.

By this time the supervisors had begun to develop a set of procedures which stilled, for a time, some of the complaints of "comic opera" behavior in board meetings which had surfaced in previous years. Five standing committees, each chaired by a majority party member, shared functions on a departmental basis. Membership on the committees was based on party affiliation and upon the seniority or influence (and occasionally even the ability) of the individual supervisors. Through the years the names of these committees were changed, and the various city agencies were shifted around among them.<sup>41</sup>

The first attempt to introduce a merit system of appointment and promotion for city employees began in 1912. The Territorial Board of Health, whose regulations were enforced by city health inspectors, devised examinations which were to educate as well as evaluate its prospective agents. The Board of Health seems to have been moderately successful for a time in persuading the supervisors to appoint only those scoring highest on these tests. Complaints of political appointments of incompetent inspectors, backed up by the cholera and yellow-fever scares of 1911-1912, helped put teeth into this system.<sup>42</sup>

When the Territorial legislature passed an act authorizing a municipal civil service commission (Act 51, Session Laws, 1913), Mayor Fern quickly appointed one. Members were Senator A. J. Wirtz, author of the measure, Representative David M. Kupihea, and John F. Doyle. Wirtz convened the first meeting of the group and, feeling that public acceptance of the merit principle depended upon a good beginning, ruled that all sessions would be open to the public.<sup>43</sup>

Within a few months the commission had set up regulations for personnel selection, job requirements, disciplinary procedures, promotion rules, an ethics code of sorts, and, in an enthusiasm which irritated the supervisors, included a traffic ordinance in its report. Only the police and fire departments were specifically covered by the commission, but their regulations, when published, covered several columns in a newspaper. They were fairly concise by later standards, but many of the regulations were considered both novel and shocking at the time.

There were provisions, for example, forbidding firemen and policemen from "loafing" in saloons or taking active part in political campaigns. Employees were required to turn over to special funds for their whole department any reward money given them for work carried out in line of duty. These measures were not popular among police and firemen. What rewards the men had ordinarily received is not clear, but there were probably few so ornate as the diamond-studded gold detective's badge given to Chief of Detectives Arthur McDuffie by the Chinese business community for quick work in capturing the murderer of a respected Chinese merchant and his wife.<sup>44</sup>

McDuffie also figured prominently in the first major test of the Civil Service Commission's powers. Shortly after the Commission had published its regulations and toured the island to instruct the rural deputies and

policemen in their meaning, Sheriff Jarrett suspended McDuffie and Detective George (?) Kellett. Both men protested and appealed to the Commission, and it became apparent that a great deal of political intrigue was involved.

The result of the McDuffie case, as far as civil service history is concerned, was that the Commission established its right to hold hearings and publish findings, despite opposition from the city attorney's office and the Board of Supervisors. It also made clear the necessity of a definition of the Commission's functions so that they would not conflict with those of the police and fire departments. Detective McDuffie remained on the job.<sup>45</sup>

As time passed, civil service principles in police, fire, and public health departments became matters of course, but the standards of compliance and enforcement left much to be desired. Efforts to extend the system to other city workers, however, were resisted by those with patronage interests and by some employees who feared that enforcement of high standards by examination might put them out of their jobs, or block promotion. Stories continued to be common that political favoritism played a major role in the selection of city employees, and complaints of lax law enforcement and politics in the police department foretold the scandals and major problems that were to shake the city in the early thirties.

The legislature of 1913 had granted enlarged fiscal powers to the city authorities, but it accompanied them with controls which often worked in a highly constricting way. One legislative mandate, for example, fixed specific portions of city revenues for school construction and maintenance, which forced the supervisors to scrimp in the remainder for funds to operate the road department. Most local income, moreover, was based on property assessments for the preceding year, and there was thus a constant lag between the city payroll and tax revenues. In 1913, comparatively a boom year for the private economy of Honolulu, the City Treasurer, Colonel Charles McCarthy, was forced at one point to arrange loans from local banks to pay municipal employees. It appears that the outgoing Board of Supervisors had left the treasury nearly bare in a last-minute rash of spending.

City budgets were still being prepared semi-annually. The funds were then turned over by the Territorial treasury on a quarterly or monthly basis according to the estimates of revenues to be received. In March 1914, Territorial Treasurer David L. Conkling suddenly informed the Honolulu supervisors that estimated tax income seemed likely to be lower than anticipated, and the City would therefore receive \$93,000 less than had been expected for the year. Since the board had already been operating on the basis of the higher estimate for three months, the savings would have to be made in the remaining nine months of the year.<sup>47</sup>

A wave of retrenchment rolled through all agencies of the City-County. Methods ranged from salary slashing to abrupt dismissals or abolition of positions. Then, before the June budget was prepared, the Territory revised its estimates again, this time finding that Honolulu need only be \$12,000 short of the original estimates. Another round of salary and position adjustments took place, upwards.<sup>48</sup>



1914 was the first year for primary elections under another 1913 statute, and political maneuvers began as early as February. Many of the usual political rumors circulated about the colorful figure of Mayor Joe Fern. A record 57 candidates turned out for 13 municipal offices in the primary election in the Fall. A filing fee of \$10 and a nomination petition signed by 15 persons were all that a candidate needed, and this plus the novelty of a party primary, apparently attracted the unusual number of eager office-seekers. About 7,000 voters participated in the primary.<sup>49</sup>

A new political party, called *Lahui*, appeared briefly in 1914. It was composed, apparently, of the disgruntled and frustrated from both the Independent and Democratic parties, including a number of those thrown out of City-County jobs or reduced in pay during the municipal economy drive of the previous spring. The platform announced by *Lahui* opposed the civil service commission and the importation of foreign laborers, except such as were bound to return to their land of origin at the end of their contracts. The tone of their program was indicated by one plank: "We hereby pledge our candidates to the local legislative assembly to repeal all laws restricting the rights of the public, and to reveal that the law is for the poor and not for the rich." Though *Lahui* offered no candidates for municipal offices, they worked against the incumbent Democrat supervisors and possibly also against Mayor Fern.<sup>50</sup>

By November, when the general election was held, Honolulu politics had been on a marathon basis for at least four months. This was the first year in which candidates resorted in any large degree to newspaper advertisements, in addition to the usual rallies. One candidate for mayor, Republican Joel Cohen, also planned to use billboards in his primary effort, but a barrage of protests from the Outdoor Circle, then at the height of its anti-billboard crusade, finally reduced Cohen to a few token signs.<sup>51</sup>

All the incumbent City officeholders, except for Supervisor Sam Hardesty, ran for re-election, and every Democrat incumbent, except for Sheriff Charles Rose, was defeated. Joe Fern's last-minute magic deserted him. John C. Lane became Honolulu's first Republican mayor, with a solidly Republican Board of Supervisors: William Ahia, Charles N. Arnold, Ben Hollinger, Robert Horner, William Larsen, Daniel Logan, and J. C. Quinn. Also elected were Republicans David Kalauokalani, Clerk; James Bicknell, Auditor; John Cathcart, Attorney; and D. L. Conkling, Treasurer. The Republicans reported spending \$3,400 on the campaign, a tenth, said the *Star-Bulletin*, of what they had spent in 1912. Republican supervisor William Ahia, who led the ticket, declared an expenditure of \$40.<sup>52</sup>

Mayor Fern had inaugurated the practice of holding an annual New Year's Eve dance on Bishop Street, apparently about 1912. In 1914 the festivities were dimmed, however, by Fern's impending loss of office and by the fact that an even gayer New Year's Ball was going on nearby in the National Guard armory. Its host was fellow Democrat Governor Lucius Pinkham. If Republican disunity had served their opponents in 1912, the tables were reversed two years later.<sup>53</sup>

The Republican press looked forward to the beginning of a new era in local government, and they took parting shots at the "petty bickering" and political inefficiencies ascribed to the Fern administrations. The new supervisors and Mayor Lane did manage to avoid some of the public confrontations which had marked their predecessors' terms, yet the old differences, arising from personalities or from differing duties and responsibilities, continued to arise. Despite party loyalties, for instance, the mayor continued to seek as much appointive power as possible, while the supervisors continued to resist his encroachments on what they regarded as their *kuleana*, area of concern.

After a few months of experience this board reorganized the system of standing committees in the interest of better grouping of functions, and they tried again to improve the rules for board meetings. Changes in membership took place with the death of Supervisor James Quinn and then the resignation of his successor, Robert W. Shingle. Shingle, after only about eight months in office, pleaded the press of business and family responsibilities, and Mayor Lane appointed old-timer F. M. Hatch to replace him.<sup>54</sup>

Joseph Fern was not long out of public office, and he apparently was never out of politics. The death of City Jailer Julius Asch created a vacancy to be filled by Sheriff Charles Rose, the one Democrat remaining in the City administration. Fern got the jailer's job.<sup>55</sup>

Immediately after the election of 1914 the proponents of city charter revision took up their campaign again, with strong support from the press. Their aim now was to persuade the 1915 legislature to call a city charter convention. The product of the convention would then be presented to the 1917 legislature for adoption. In the meantime the usual patches on the existing municipal law were proposed, chiefly one to separate the dates for local and Territorial elections and another returning control of public health and sanitation work to the Territory. The latter measure had been brewing since the failure of understaffed City agencies to deal effectively with an epidemic outbreak in 1911.<sup>56</sup>

Both the charter convention for Oahu and the election date measures passed. July 6, 1915, was set as the date for the election of 64 charter convention delegates, 32 to be elected from each of the 4th and 5th electoral districts. Act 160 provided for the next general election of municipal officers to be held in May 1917, and every second year thereafter.

The 1915 campaign for city charter convention delegates was a rather unexciting, non-partisan affair, which drew to the polls only about 25% of the registered voters. A number of public officeholders, including Joe Fern, ran for delegate and were elected, along with a generous sprinkling of citizens not ordinarily associated with political activities. The city had been empowered to pay for the cost of the election, but no funds were provided for the convention itself and no meeting-place set. Some of the political veterans eventually worked out a method of meeting expenses by getting pledges from prominent citizens in case the next legislature should fail to come through with an appropriation. On the strength of these pledges a loan of \$700 was negotiated

with the Bank of Hawaii. The Alexander Young Hotel lent the use of its makai rooftop pavilion for the convention sessions.<sup>57</sup>

Although the Municipal Research League and the *Star-Bulletin*, among others, were interested in the adoption of a short-ballot system and possibly a city manager, not many of the delegates appeared to feel the same. If they did, they were outmaneuvered by a group of skilled parliamentarians who finally produced a draft charter that made the existing one look better. The new document not only involved a long ballot, but it proposed to elect supervisors by ward, enlarge their powers, abandon the civil service commission, and transfer the collection of local taxes from the Territory to the city. It also contained provisions for recall and referendum. At the ridiculous extreme were details specifying the proper locations of hitching posts and signs, regulating kite-flying, and limiting the number of horses, mules, cattle, or asses which might be driven across a city and county bridge in a specified time.<sup>58</sup>

If the delegates had set out to propose a charter certain to be rejected, they could not have done a better job. In the campaign of 1916 neither of the major parties would endorse the document. Act 91 in 1915 had specified that the charter was to be submitted to the 1917 legislature, and a noisy battle raged there over almost every section. Strangely enough, a battered version finally passed both houses before Governor Pinkham's veto gave the botched charter a welcome death.<sup>59</sup>

In 1915, for the first time, Honolulu's budget passed the million-dollar mark, the increase reflecting a general growth in property valuations in the city. The rate of revenues turned over to the municipal authorities by the Territory remained pegged at  $\frac{2}{3}$  of 1% of assessed valuations, however, despite the fact that demands for City services were growing more rapidly than the fixed rate could provide for. Supervisor Robert Shingle summed up the frustrating position of his colleagues this way:<sup>60</sup>

We have been obliged to run one of the most progressive and fastest growing cities in the United States on the income of a peanut stand and under the most restricted conditions. No city on the mainland of this size is denied the right to levy its own taxes, as we are.

Treasurer D. L. Conkling agreed that the financial squeeze was severe and its remedy largely out of the hands of the Supervisors. So great were the fiscal woes of the city in 1916 that the mayor and supervisors proposed calling a special session of the legislature to deal just with city finances. Governor Pinkham, however, was so discouraging toward that plan that no formal request was ever addressed to him.<sup>61</sup>

In 1916 Joe Fern, still holding his jailer's job, had a difficult political decision to make, and he delayed over it for some time. A wide rift in Democratic ranks had opened between the "Link" McCandless-Johnny Wilson faction, on the one hand, and that headed by Governor Lucius Pinkham and Territorial (formerly City) Treasurer Charles J. McCarthy on the other. The split ran all the way down to the precinct level. Though he had campaigned

for McCandless in 1912, Fern sided this time with the Pinkham faction and then announced that he would run again for mayor in 1917. Members of the McCandless faction intimated in reply that if their man were defeated in his 1916 race for the Delegate's post, he might himself be a Democratic candidate for mayor in 1917, a threat which McCandless did not carry out.<sup>62</sup>

When the City primary campaign came along in the spring of 1917, the legislature was still tinkering with the proposed city charter, and the date of the elections was postponed a month in the hope that the session would be ended by then. Under the new measure the primary was held in April, but as it turned out the legislature was still in session and still had not acted on the charter. Governor Pinkham's veto, then, forestalled what could have been an extremely confused legal problem had the elections been held and then a new charter taken effect.<sup>63</sup>

In the April 1917 primary 18 Republican candidates and 14 Democrats vied for the 7 supervisorial seats. For mayor the Democrats backed Joe Fern again, while a Republican race developed between John C. Lane, the incumbent, and party perennial Joel Cohen. Of the 10,711 registered voters, approximately 63% voted.

Except for the mayor's race the general election results were clearly forecast in the primary. The top seven votegetters for supervisor were the same in both elections, though their order of popularity shifted somewhat. Elected to office were William Ahia, Charles N. Arnold, Ben Hollinger, and C. A. Bellina, Republicans, William H. McClellan, Democrat, E. A. Mott-Smith, Republican, and Lester Petrie, Democrat, in that order.<sup>64</sup>

Joseph James Fern was returned to office by a margin of some 300 votes, when victory for incumbent Lane had been widely expected up to the end of the campaign. Lane's campaign expenses, however, had been attacked even by his fellow Republicans, and it was alleged that that issue, plus last-minute ethnic appeals to voters and promises of favors, had won for Fern. His supporters cried "sour grapes" to those who complained of the popular Hawaiian's election tactics.<sup>65</sup>

In the closing weeks of their term the retiring Republican supervisors and Mayor Lane revived and passed an ordinance, earlier set aside, creating the new position of superintendent of public grounds and buildings. Supervisor Ben Hollinger was largely responsible for the bill, and at his suggestion A. K. Vierra was named to fill the post. The superintendent was given authority to appoint all park keepers and school janitors, subject to board approval.<sup>66</sup>

When the new-old mayor took office on July 2, 1917, then, he found an important new position with extensive patronage powers in the hands of a Republican, Vierra. Worse still, from the mayor's point of view, a 5-2 Republican majority controlled the board of supervisors. Fern once again attempted to extend the mayor's appointive powers, only to have most of his first appointments, including that of John H. Wilson as city engineer, tabled by the board.

Fern was sidelined by serious illness for several weeks, and then he retaliated against the supervisors' actions by vetoing a number of items among payroll

warrants. Lincoln McCandless, then filed an injunction suit against the city treasurer to prevent Vierra from being paid. The suit claimed that the superintendent of public grounds and buildings had been given wider powers than were allowed under Territorial law and that the manner of his appointment was illegal.

Vierra and the ordinance creating his office were eventually sustained, but without Fern's signature his and other payroll warrants could not be cashed. At least that was the law, though some of the warrants actually were cashed. In this impasse a compromise was effected, with two Republican supervisors joining with the two Democrats in a temporary "Efficiency Party" coalition. This group then reorganized the standing committees and controlled them.

Some of Mayor Fern's appointments were eventually confirmed, but his greatest hope, that of placing Johnny Wilson in the engineer's office, was again frustrated. The deadlock lasted until nearly the end of 1917, when A. S. Cantrin was finally appointed and approved as engineer. The mayor proved unable to oust Building Superintendent Vierra, though at one point the coalition supervisors, led by Mott-Smith, proposed to combine the positions of engineer and superintendent, allegedly in the interest of efficiency and economy.<sup>67</sup>

At the outset of World War I, in 1914-15, there had been great excitement in Honolulu, at least in the haole community, centering about several German vessels which arrived and were interned in the harbor. Japanese warships kept them bottled up. As the European war wore on and United States involvement drew nearer, the Honolulu press echoed the increasingly strong pro-Allied sentiment of the mainland papers, and the attitude of neutrality which had appeared at first gradually diminished. The German community in the city was increasingly subjected to snubs, discrimination, and outright injustices.<sup>68</sup>

Once the United States entered the war in 1917 the face of the city was affected by the location of temporary encampments on the grounds of Iolani Palace and at Fort Armstrong. The old Hawaiian Hotel was purchased for use as the Armed Forces Y.M.C.A., and a number of other special enterprises sprang up to cater to the needs of an enlarged armed services population. Honoluluans took great pride in their patriotic record of wartime activities through enlistments, bond purchases, and committees to wrap bandages or to collect clothing and other donations for the military or for suffering allies. Patriotic campaigns and demonstrations frequently attracted public attention, and Mayor Fern was prominent in many of them.<sup>69</sup>

But the war years also brought some hardships. One effect of the war and its disruption of normal shipping was a series of food shortages and generally rising costs of living in Honolulu. The proclamation of meatless days, for example, predictably drove upward the price of fish. To those for whom fish was a daily diet, whether with poi or rice, rising prices without a similar rise in wages created a serious problem.

Mayor Fern, who had campaigned for cheaper flour in 1917, in the following year attacked the inaction of United States Food Commissioner J. F. Child on the rising cost of food for the poor. Fish which normally sold for about

20¢ a pound was reported to have risen to 35¢ or 40¢. Fishermen were receiving no more for their catch, while the working people who relied on it were receiving the same wages as before. Fern suggested the formation of a Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce to give his fellow-Hawaiians organized representation and to create a pool of capital for forming cooperatives to market fish and poi.<sup>70</sup>

Sympathizing clearly with those who had elected him, the Mayor attacked what he termed “marketing *huis*” alleged to be profiting from the higher prices. Fern and a local food administration agent, K. Hamamura, stationed themselves at the downtown fish market to observe sales, making it clear that if stall keepers charged exorbitant prices they would hear from the Mayor. Fern’s presence apparently tended to hold down the prices, at least as long as he was at the market. The Mayor then followed up this action with a threat to set up a municipal market where fishermen could sell their catch directly to the public. In 1918 a special session of the legislature authorized the city to create a municipal market, using monies from the city’s own cash fund.<sup>71</sup>

The idea of a government-operated market had first been put into practice in Honolulu by the Territory in 1913, in cooperation with the federal agricultural experiment station. The idea then was to find a regular outlet for the produce of the small farmers of Oahu. That market was never a financial success, and in 1919 the legislature presented its “white elephant” to the City, without the \$15,000 revolving funds on which the Territory had operated it. And so Joe Fern’s well-meant venture into public marketing saddled his and the succeeding city administration with an additional fiscal burden. How much it may have helped hold down food prices to consumers is not clear, but the political effect was good.<sup>72</sup>

The war years seemed to give the added support of patriotism to a number of efforts to reform public morals in Honolulu. The suppression of gambling and prostitution, for example, perennial police problems, got additional attention in 1916–18 because of their possible effect upon the increasing number of servicemen in town.

Late in 1916 a grand jury report recommended that Iwilei be closed down as an area restricted for prostitution. There was ample evidence, moreover, that the business had expanded beyond the confines of the Iwilei district, and this, coupled with the embarrassment of civic elements over the existence of a red-light district close to the harbor and downtown, caused the sheriff and his men to act. The result appears to have been only a temporary interruption, however, during which the old arguments were revived that suppression would merely spread disease and sex crimes throughout the city.<sup>73</sup>

In January 1917, the *Star-Bulletin* editorialized that Iwilei was back in business, despite the alleged cleanup. Chief of Detectives Arthur McDuffie promptly denied the report, pointing out that some 40 white prostitutes had left for the mainland in the face of the police campaign, and only 20 remained. The new grand jury expressed cautious optimism on the “closing” of Iwilei, but then it expressed a fear that the center of the business might be moving to Wahiawa, close to the growing military base at Schofield Barracks.<sup>74</sup>

Late in January forthright Supervisor Robert Horner, speaking as a minority member of a Chamber of Commerce vice inquiry committee, advocated establishment of an officially sanctioned and supervised red-light district. He opposed, specifically, a recently enacted law allowing any citizen to secure temporary injunctions against the use of private property for alleged improper purposes. This, said Horner, "is nothing more than an effort to place the control of really criminal offenses in private hands." To say the least, Horner's position was not widely popular, and he received no support from the Fern administration.

The Mayor did become involved in the question, however, in 1918, when a new grand jury report found the city again foul with prostitution, not only in its old Iwilei haunts but now spread even to Makiki and Manoa. Additional fire was given to the agitation for reform when General John P. Wisser, commander of the Army forces stationed in Honolulu, threatened to put most of the city out of bounds to all his troops unless "prevalent vice conditions" were cleaned up.

Mayor Fern vigorously defended the record of his administration, pointing out that the city could hardly be expected to maintain a perfect environment on its budget in view of the large number of unmarried males the Army had quartered on the island. He charged that the city seldom received any cooperation from federal officers in such matters and that the police had closed down Iwilei without help, though the military were its major customers. General Wisser in reply unbent somewhat, acknowledged the magnitude of the city's problem, and pledged greater cooperation. In April 1918, President Wilson issued an executive order for the suppression of prostitution on Oahu, and thereafter Army cooperation with the Honolulu police was strengthened, for a time at least.<sup>76</sup>

The grand jury also complained of a growth in illegal sales of liquor and narcotics, which the police department's practice of sporadic raids failed to end. Gambling continued to be a problem for similar reasons. As an elected official the sheriff had a great deal of independence from control by the mayor and even by the supervisors, though they theoretically held the power of the purse. The 1918 grand jury recommended separating the police department from the sheriff's office, but it was to take more than a decade, and the Massie case, to achieve that.<sup>77</sup>

Another wartime crusade centered about prohibition of the sale or use of alcoholic beverages. Again patriotic reasons were given for a reform long sought by a part of the community. Certain civic bodies urged the President to declare the island dry because of its vital defense role, the presence of a large body of troops, and in order to save grain needed to feed both armed forces and the starving masses Europe.

The President finally issued an executive order forbidding liquor sales, but its wording was such that the goal of total prohibition was not achieved. The Board of Supervisors entered the act with an ordinance forbidding the sale or gift of alcoholic beverages to military personnel. That measure was immediately attacked as class legislation, and Supervisor Ben Hollinger pushed for total

prohibition or none. The liquor commission noted a brisk increase in sales just before the President's order went into effect, and one newspaper commentator remarked that perhaps prohibition would be pushed thereafter most vigorously by those with the best stocked cellars.<sup>78</sup>

In the field of public morals the war years brought out the most ultra-conservative of citizens' views, also wrapped in the mantle of patriotism. The supervisors frequently left it to Mayor Fern to deal with such crises. An eminently respectable and moral man, his personal motives were above question, but Joe Fern showed both a liberal point of view and a sense of humor in dealing with such questions.

At one point the mayor was asked to pass judgment on whether or not "dragging," a new dance style, should be permitted on the floors of dance halls in Honolulu. His grave judgment was that so long as no outright disorder accompanied its use, any dance step would appear to be acceptable.<sup>79</sup>

On the delicate matter of the new bathing apparel being worn by some local and visiting young ladies at Waikiki, a similarly permissive view came from the mayor. He remarked on one occasion that though he had looked as thoroughly as he could, he had seen nothing indecent. Mayor Fern was finally persuaded of the propriety of the new bathing suits, he said, when the comparative ease of swimming, and thus the water safety, of the new garments were explained to him by one of the young women. Besides, he observed officially, the girls looked better in men's suits anyway.<sup>80</sup>

But in 1918 the women's auxiliary of the Outrigger Canoe Club asked the supervisors to prohibit young women from wearing the one-piece suits on the beach or in public. The girls, they alleged, spent more time lounging than swimming in their brief attire. The ladies wanted an ordinance to require skirts reaching to just above the knee, with neck covering to a point "within four inches of the esophagus." The Mayor wryly suggested that the ladies might meet their patriotic responsibilities better by knitting and making bandages than by such efforts at public censorship.<sup>81</sup>

The patriotic fervors of the war years had not completely damped the fires of political passion in Honolulu. For one thing a coalition of Republicans and Democrats, Supervisors Mott-Smith and Arnold with Petrie and McClellan, known to the press as the "Efficiency Four" had set themselves to thwart some of the patronage and expenditure schemes of both the mayor and the three remaining Republican members of the board. One result of this was a split in Republican party ranks, again, which carried over into the municipal campaign of 1919.<sup>82</sup>

There were personality conflicts as well. At the end of 1918 a long-simmering feud between Mayor Fern and Supervisor Hollinger burst into the open over plans for the annual New Year's dance on Bishop Street. Since the Mayor had never taken action to make the ball an official city function, Hollinger now did so and planned a party for the capitol grounds, with the City band providing the music. The Mayor, with the benefit of a quick opinion from the city attorney, won the day, and the general mood of jubilation following from the end of the war in November helped make the dance a gala occasion.<sup>83</sup>



1919 was a City election year, and the legislature that spring gave the campaign an entirely new dimension. Under a new statute the terms of office of both mayor and supervisors were extended from two years to four and election dates were rescheduled so that those who took office in July 1919, would serve until January 1924, the longest elective terms in city history. At the same time salaries were greatly increased, the mayor's to the almost unheard-of-figure of \$6,000 a year.

Rumor had it that the Republicans, who controlled the legislature, were hoping by this measure to tempt more businessmen to run for the board and were hoping to persuade Prince Kuhio to oust Democrat Fern from his hold on the mayor's office. If true, their plans went sadly awry. Prince Kuhio could not be tempted away from his Delegate's post in Washington. He may have been even more reluctant to oppose Fern, with whom he had a good many Hawaiian sentiments in common. And the business community found little to attract it away from fascinating postwar business prospects to the part-time supervisorships.<sup>84</sup>

Former Mayor John C. Lane was expected to be the Republican mayoral candidate to oppose Fern, for the fourth time, but in the May primary he was unexpectedly defeated by Clarence Crabbe, then sometimes referred to as the "father of the Republican Party in Hawaii." Apparently some Democrats had crossed over party lines to vote in the Republican primary, which was possible under the law then in force, in order to give Fern a presumably weaker opponent. In the general election in June Fern won handily over the aging Crabbe.<sup>85</sup>

In the contest for supervisors, incumbents Mott-Smith and Bellina declined to run again, and the Republican county committee refused to endorse their other two incumbents, Hollinger and Ahia. A completely new slate was offered by party officials, but the popular Hollinger won anyway. He was joined on the Republican side by Charles N. Arnold and the colorful, popular Eben P. Low. So badly were the Republicans split that year that even durable David K. Kalauokalani, Jr., won reelection as city clerk by only a narrow margin.

Mayor Fern, then, could greet a Democrat majority on the board of supervisors in 1919, with W. H. McClellan and Lester Petrie being joined by newcomer Jonah Kumalae and returnee Manuel C. Pacheco. The last two were also members of the Territorial legislature, Pacheco a senator and Kumalae a representative, and a noisy controversy over their eligibility to hold two elective offices simultaneously broke out during the campaign and ended in lawsuits after the election. The court cases were not yet completed when the time came for the new board to take office. Ahia and Bellina, members of the outgoing board, refused to vacate their seats, and they were joined by Edward P. Fogarty, a Republican, who had received the next highest number of votes in the 1919 balloting.<sup>86</sup>

To make matters still more complicated, City Clerk Kalauokalani issued certificates of election to Fogarty and to William J. Sheldon, a Democrat, who had polled just below Fogarty. This would have given the Republicans

a 4-3 majority. Kalaauokalani's action was challenged by Attorney-General Irwin, who threatened to prosecute him for fraud for issuing election certificates without authorization. Irwin contended that if the courts found Pacheco and Kumalae ineligible, the mayor should then be called upon to appoint two supervisors rather than have the next highest votes decide the issue. He threatened to call the grand jury into the special session to hear his charges.

Eventually the courts of the Territory found in favor of Pacheco and Kumalae. It was reported that City Clerk Kalaauokalani barely escaped being found in contempt of court. In the meantime, at midnight on June 30 the Republican members of the old board had attempted to remain in session, though Mayor Fern and the Democrats had walked out. The next day they again attempted to convene a session, Ahia and Bellina still claiming their seats.

When the Supreme Court finally rendered its decision, the new board and mayor tried to organize for business, on July 8. Ahia, Bellina, and Fogarty all appeared to press their claims. A riotous session followed, with shouts of scorn or encouragement from spectators until Sheriff Rose, on order from the mayor, forcibly escorted Bellina and Ahia from the assembly room. The long term was off to an ominous start.<sup>87</sup>

The first six months of the new term seemed to fulfill all the worst fears aroused at its beginning. Republican office-holders secured a swarm of injunctions against dismissals, expenditure of funds, and even the operations of City departments. Jonah Kumalae, angry over Mayor Fern's veto of several of his pet projects, formed a coalition with the Republican minority to force a realignment of the Board's committees. In the new setup Kumalae held the key committee chairmanships and then faced expulsion from the Democratic party. Bickering and name-calling took up a good deal of time during Board sessions as the City faced a gasoline shortage, a water shortage, inflation, and breakdowns in public health from typhoid and influenza epidemics.<sup>88</sup>

In the midst of this Joe Fern took time out in October to speak like a Dutch uncle to his fellow Hawaiians at a civic club convention. He declared that "lack of cooperation" was one of their major problems. The Hawaiians, he declared, took his political differences into his private life instead of just "throwing mud for two months every two years" (during campaigns) and then living in peace the rest of the time.

At the same time the Mayor defended himself against charges of maintaining slum conditions in his tenements on River Street and in Chinatown. "I've got 260 people living in my tenements," declared Fern, "I won't order those people out until they've got some other place to go. If the people who own so much land here would put up houses costing \$1,500 and then say to my 260 Hawaiian tenants, 'Here, take this house, move in and pay \$10 down and \$10 month,' then I'll condemn my tenements." The Bishop Estate, from which he leased the buildings, he added, would not give him a long enough lease to justify remodeling them.<sup>89</sup>

As 1919 moved toward its close Mayor Joseph Fern appeared to be in fine fettle. The annual New Year's ball would be held, he announced, and he

would dance with the first pretty girl who presented herself. But time was running out for Joe Fern. He had been suffering from diabetes for some time, and early in the new year he came down with what the *Star-Bulletin* reported as "breakbone fever." As his condition worsened, the Mayor absented himself from board meetings, and on February 9, 1920, he was removed to Queen's Hospital. There, eleven days later, Joe Fern died.<sup>90</sup>

The grief that spread over Honolulu was genuine. The Mayor's body lay in state in the capitol building (Iolani Palace) with the approval of Governor Charles McCarthy, who was then in Washington. Hawaiian civic club members and other admirers of *Keo Kimo Pana* drew the hearse from the capitol to the Catholic cemetery on King Street, near the Ward Estate. City offices were closed in his memory.

The press, which had often ridiculed Fern's untutored English and questioned his qualifications for office, now offered a different judgment. According to the *Star-Bulletin*,

Mr. Fern stood in the relation of a father to his people. He was one of the old school of Hawaiians, open handed, sympathetic and always ready to help his people. Daily there was a stream of Hawaiian poor crowding his waiting room and coming to him for assistance in family rows, for legal advice or a loan or to straighten out trouble with their children.

While the supervisors at times fought him tooth and nail and criticized him in no uncertain terms in open meeting, he nevertheless had the respect of all of them. He is sincerely mourned by the board, by all the city employees and the people of the city generally.<sup>91</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *PCA*, January 1-5, 1909, *Passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Men of Hawaii: 1917* (Honolulu, 1917) p. 103; *EB*, February 21, 1920, p. 1; *PCA*, February 21, 1920, pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> The Honolulu City directories, 1912-1920, indicate Fern's residences. See also *PCA*, March 2, 1911; *Men of Hawaii*, 1917, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> *HSB*, September 29, 1949, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *PCA*, February 21, 1920, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> The *Hawaiian Gazette* and the *Evening Bulletin*, in addition to the *Advertiser* gave extensive, though varied campaign coverage from September 1, through the November elections.

<sup>7</sup> A blatant ethnic appeal was made by delegate candidate Lincoln McCandless at an Aala Park rally in October. *HG*, October 13, 1908, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *PCA*, November 4-5, 1908.

<sup>9</sup> *EB*, November 18, p. 5, December 22, p. 1, 1908.

<sup>10</sup> *EB*, January 4, August 16, 1910.

<sup>11</sup> *PCA*, November 1, 5, 1908.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, January 4, 16, 1909.

<sup>13</sup> *EB*, January 4, 16, 1909.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1, 6, 10, 1909.

- <sup>15</sup> *Legislative Journals*, 1909. All the major newspapers gave coverage throughout the legislative session.
- <sup>16</sup> *EB*, May 17, 1909.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, August 24, September 3, October 2, 4, 8, 9, 13, 20, 28, 1909.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1911.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, August 16, 1910.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, January 28, February 7, 1910.
- <sup>21</sup> *PCA*, May 3, 1910; *EB*, February 5, 14, March 9–11, 1910.
- <sup>22</sup> *HAA*, 1910, pp. 162, 175; *PCA*, May 15, 1910.
- <sup>23</sup> *PCA*, July 27, September 1, 2, 1910.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, November 9, 15, 26, 29, 30, December 7, 11, 17, 1910.
- <sup>25</sup> *EB*, November 12, 1910.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 24, 26, 27, February 15, 1911.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, February 24, 27, March 2, 6, 8, 1911.
- <sup>28</sup> The press gave fulsome coverage to the issue through the early months of 1912. See also Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York, 1961), pp. 168–172.
- <sup>29</sup> *PCA*, November 11, 1910; *EB*, January 3, 4, 1911.
- <sup>30</sup> *EB*, February 2, April 3, 1912.
- <sup>31</sup> H. G. Field, *Report on the Administrative Organization of the City and County of Honolulu*. (Honolulu, 1912), p. 3.
- <sup>32</sup> *Hawaiian Star*, April 3, 1912. Hawaiian language papers also expressed suspicions of the Chamber's motives, and the Governor's.
- <sup>33</sup> *HSB*, December 5, 1912.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, August, 9, 12, 14, 17, 19, 22, 27, 1912.
- <sup>35</sup> *Platform. Socialist Party of Hawaii*, 1912, Miscellaneous file, *AH*; *EB*, February 29; *HSB*, September 12, 13, 24, 1912.
- <sup>36</sup> *HSB*, October 31, November 1, 1912.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, October 17, 23, 1912.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, November 6, 1912.
- <sup>39</sup> *HSB*, January 6, 1913.
- <sup>40</sup> *Session Laws of Hawaii*, 1913, Acts 51, 131, 138, 163, 170.
- <sup>41</sup> Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, January 6, 1911, October 11, 1915, January 4, 1920.
- <sup>42</sup> Territory of Hawaii, Board of Health, *Annual Reports*, 1913–1920; *Session Laws of Hawaii*, 1913, Act 119; *Bulletin*, February 7, 15, 19, 1912.
- <sup>43</sup> *HSB*, June 28, 30, 1913.
- <sup>44</sup> *HSB*, June 2, 30, August 1, 4, 5, 21, September 10, October 7, 1913.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, October 23, 27, 29, 30, 1913.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, August 29, November 13, 17, 24, 1913.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, 1914.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1914.
- <sup>49</sup> *Session Laws of Hawaii*, 1913, Act 151; *HSB*, February 28, May 2, August 22, 24, September 14, 1914.
- <sup>50</sup> *HSB*, April 8, July 1, 1914.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1914.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, November 20, 1914.
- <sup>53</sup> *PCA*, January 1, 1915.

- <sup>54</sup> *HSB*, May 25, 27, 29, October 12, 1915, February 26, March 1, 14, 16, 27, 28, 1916.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, January 20, 1915.
- <sup>56</sup> *PCA*, February 6, April 5, 6, 1915; *HSB*, March 3, 6, 1915; *Session Laws of Hawaii*, 1915, Acts 91, 160.
- <sup>57</sup> *HSB*, July 1-7, August 4, September 1, 7, 9-15, 1915.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, September 23-October 11, November 1-13, 1915 (almost daily articles).
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, April 13, 24, 1917.
- <sup>60</sup> *Mayor's Report*, 1915-16; *HSB*, March 3, 4, 16, 1916.
- <sup>61</sup> *HSB*, March 29, April 8, July 17, 1916.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, April 5, 17-19, 26, August 25, September 5, 7, 1916.
- <sup>63</sup> *Session Laws of Hawaii*, 1917, Act 5; *HSB* and *PCA*, April 24, 25, 1917.
- <sup>64</sup> *HSB*, May 25-29, June 5-6, 1917.
- <sup>65</sup> *PCA* and *HSB*, June 6-8, 1917.
- <sup>66</sup> *HSB*, June 29, 1917.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2-6, 1917, August and September issues contained numerous articles covering the dispute. The *Advertiser* did the same. Much less is to be found in the Supervisors' *Minutes* for the same period.
- <sup>68</sup> Ralph S. Kuykendall, *Hawaii in the World War* (Honolulu, 1928), pp. 415-446; Peter McDonald, "Germans in Hawaii during World War I," paper presented before the Hawaiian Historical Society, January 1972.
- <sup>69</sup> Kuykendall, *Passim*.
- <sup>70</sup> *HSB*, January 21-February 15, 1918, saw frequent articles, as did the *Advertiser*.
- <sup>71</sup> *Session Laws of Hawaii, Special Session*, 1918, Act 16.
- <sup>72</sup> *HSB*, March 9, April 23, May 25, 1919.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, December 2, 1916.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, January 3-5, 8, 1917.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1917.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, January 11, 22-24, April 13, 1918.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, January 11, 1918.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, March 4, 6, 9, 13, 1918; Kuykendall, *Hawaii in the World War*, Chapter XVIII, "Prohibition as a War Measure."
- <sup>79</sup> *HSB*, November 5, December 11, 12, 1918.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, July 28, 1913.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, June 19, 21, 24, 29, July 1, 1918.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26-29, 1917, January 22, 1918.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, December 26, 31, 1918, January 1, 1919.
- <sup>84</sup> *PCA*, February 21, 1920; *HSB*, May 3, 1919; *Session Laws of Hawaii*, 1919, Act 62.
- <sup>85</sup> *HSB*, January 3, April 15, 17, 26, May 1-3, 10, 19, June 2-4, 1919.
- <sup>86</sup> *HSB* and *PCA*, June 30-July 9, 1919.
- <sup>87</sup> *Kumalae Kalauokalani*, 25 *Haw.* 5, 1919; *HSB*, July 1-9, 1919.
- <sup>88</sup> *HSB*, July-August, 1919, carried nearly daily articles on City-County disputes, as did the *Advertiser*. Typhoid appeared in September; influenza in January.
- <sup>89</sup> *HSB*, October 23, 1919.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, December 26, 1919; February 9, 18-20, 1920.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, February 21, 23; *PCA*, February 21, 1920.