

*Transcript of 1994 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor Benjamin Cayetano, delivered on December 5, 1994. Transcribed from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin (12/05/1994) by Perry Arrasmith, 2022, under the auspices of the School of Communication & Information, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.*

## **The 1994 Inaugural Address of Benjamin Cayetano December 5, 1994**

I am profoundly grateful for the great honor you have conferred on me by electing me as your governor. And I will honor you with my performance in the job.

I must begin with some words of thanks. Many people helped me. I did not get here alone. And I must start by thanking those who are closest to me—the members of my family. There have been good times and bad times throughout the years, but my family has never wavered in their love or their support.

I offer a word of thanks to outgoing Gov. John Waihee. We have not always agreed on everything, but we have been open and honest with each other. I have benefited many times from his friendship and his thoughts.

Lt. Gov. (Mazie) Hirono and I have traveled about the islands since the election, we have discovered something quite heartwarming.

Although it was a difficult, hard-fought campaign, we have found that whether people voted for us or not, they have high hopes that we will succeed.

The people of Hawaii want us to succeed, and Mazie and I are grateful for that.

This feeling of hope that they express to us in airports and shopping centers is understandable.

Down through the years, the American people have always had a high level of hope.

Our nation was created by hopeful, courageous people. People who sacrificed to make life better in the New World than it had been in the Old.

However, the election in November was driven not so much by hope as by frustration. In private life, the people have worked hard, yet have seen their disposable income decline over the years.

In public life, they have seen office holders who promise much, but deliver little.

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From City Hall to the state Legislature to Washington, D.C., they have seen governments losing the ability to function efficiently or economically. Governments in gridlock.

In November, the American people spoke up.

And the results of the election have put office holders all across the country on notice.

The people have told those they have chosen to elect: Perform or make a place for someone who will.

To use the old Navy term, the people have said, “shape up or ship out.”

This message has not been lost on us. But Mazie and I have known from the beginning that we are capable of performing in these offices.

And we will do just that!

My friends, this ceremony is not the place to lay out the details of the new administration. You will be hearing about them in the days ahead and when I give my State-of-the State address to the new Legislature next month.

But it is the time to indicate the direction of our administration, and briefly, I shall do so.

There is uncompleted business, of course, that come under the control of every new administration.

We will inherit problems at the same time we begin our new initiatives. We have a clear plan to move ahead on both fronts.

In time we shall surely make our own mistakes and create our own problems.

But I want to assure you of something, right now. In any time of trouble you will never find me or my Cabinet running to a bunker and “hunkering down” defensively. That has never been my style.

As governor, my cards will be face up on the table, as they have always been.

If you want to know something, call my office.

Openness will be the hallmark of my administration.

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As to the issues themselves, education remains at the top of everybody's list.

Progress has been made, but the problems of educating our children still loom high above us. It is time to rethink and rededicate our efforts.

And I invite all citizens to join with us as we move toward the hard decisions of spending and allocating school funds...as we move toward decentralizing the Education Department...as we move toward a time of greater teacher creativity...a time when our children are more effectively challenged to learn.

Many will say that these things take time, and they do. But they don't have to take forever.

We put the A+ program into operation in only six months. In four years, it has grown from 15,000 to 27,000 children in attendance.

The A+ experience has taught me a great deal about how to attack inertia and get agreement.

And I will use that experience in every area as we push ahead toward new horizons.

We will make this government more effective and responsive in every respect!

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Let us look for a moment at Hawaii's economy.

The loss of the traditional sugar industry and the loss of income from military spending are massive problems, but we cannot be immobilized by change.

And so here too, I invite all of you to participate as we turn to the future, as we develop a world-class economy that competes in global markets for the export of our goods and services as we work to attract investment capital that makes maximum use of our valuable human and natural resources.

And yet as we reach out for these opportunities, we cannot lose sight of the fragility of nature in the Aloha State.

And so I invite you once again to work with the administration as we find the right balance

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between our precious environment and our economic development.

You know and I know that there are no easy answers here.

If we listen to the uncompromising diehards on either side of this question, we will get nowhere.

We must listen, decide and act with compassion, wisdom and a high sense of urgency.

There are of course, many other issues that we shall confront—old and new, simple and complex.

But in these brief words, I have wanted to give you a sense for the dynamic approach of this new administration.

In the months and years ahead, I will confront things as they are—and then take action upon them. And I will avoid the easy answers.

The invitations I have issued to you to join us are not just fancy words in a speech. They are genuine.

We cannot succeed without your active interest, your dedication, your partnership.

For if the people do not care about the fate of their state, then who will?

As John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address more than 30 years ago: “In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, rests the final success; It is fitting that the inauguration ceremonies are or failure of our cause.”

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In this election, integrity in government was the number one issue in the minds of Hawaii’s voters.

Integrity and ethics are matters that are beyond legislation, of course. They exist only in the human heart.

I knew that it will be my job to set the ethical standards of our administration—and that those standards will be reflected throughout the state. Not just in government...but everywhere.

There is yet another important issue that we face. It is an issue that goes beyond ordinary politics.

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And it must be solved so that we can all move into the future with a real sense of unity.

The American annexation of Hawaii took place in 1893. And now, a century later, we are still trying to find a way to deal with the lost sovereignty of the Hawaiian people.

Abraham Lincoln said that we can not escape history, and he was right. We cannot escape history...but we cannot return to it either.

We must live today with the echoes of Captain Cook's landing long ago at the mouth on the Waimea River.

During my term in office, we shall be making a 21st century response to the values and mistakes of our 19th century predecessors.

The sovereignty issue is difficult and emotional. But I welcome the chance to lead all the people of Hawaii toward the right solution.

I know that we will not accomplish perfection with the stroke of a pen. I know that not everyone will be satisfied.

In a democracy, unanimity is seldom, if ever achieved.

But I also know that this is an issue where we must be considerate of others.

And I hope that our traditional Aloha spirit will prevail. For only by being considerate can we live together in a society that is both free and diverse.

There is simply no other way.

During the American Revolution, Thomas Paine wrote much about freedom. "Those who would enjoy the benefits of freedom," he said, "must undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

As your governor, I am ready.

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In closing, I'd like to speak more personally for a moment, and I'd like to speak for my partner in leadership, Lt. Gov. Mazie Hirono.

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Both Mazie and I came from humble immigrant homes. I began life on Silva Street in Kalihi.

We were both raised by single parents and had what it is fair to say were difficult childhoods.

I mention these things not to boast about what we have achieved, but simply to remind you that we have known less happy days than this one...and, most important, that we have not forgotten them.

We understand from our own experience the value of gaining an education and becoming an independent human being.

These feelings will permeate our days in office as they have permeated our lives.

And so we are not casual about having arrived here on this platform today.

It is, as you can well imagine, a big deal for both of us!

The course of the Cayetano administration is now set, and we shall stay on course.

Our aim is high, and we shall not be satisfied with a lesser achievement.

We seek nothing less than the reaffirmation of the government of the state of Hawaii as a public servant—an instrument of the people that gets things done.

In partnership with all citizens, we shall confidently plan and hope and dream, searching for that shining upward path that has always been fundamental to American life.

Yet at the same time, we will know that our plans and hopes and dreams are not enough.

In the end, it is what we do that will count.

In the end, it is what we do that will create the new Hawaii.

It is fitting that the inauguration ceremonies are held here before this imposing and historic structure.

Iolani Palace is one of the historic symbols of Hawaiian history and life, a landmark in every sense of the word.

This palace has looked down upon sad days as well as bright ones.

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I am determined that our new administration will add many bright days to the long history of these islands.

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