

Washington, D.C.: Public Relations: Newsletters: Dock Strike Bill

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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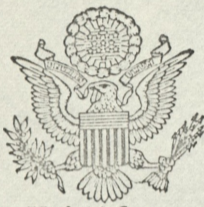
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PROTECTION FOR HAWAII'S LIFELINE

Dear Friend;

Hawaii's most critical problem deserving my special legislative effort is the need to guarantee the continuous and uninterrupted flow of ocean shipping between the West Coast and our state. The measure which I have introduced with the support of my colleague, Sen. Fong, and which has also been introduced on the House side by Congressman Matsunaga and Congresswoman Mink is designed to serve that purpose. It extends the period of coverage beyond that contained in my earlier proposal in response to the many communications I have received urging such extension. My remarks upon the introduction of this landmark bill may be of interest to you. I solicit your comments.

David K. Inouye
U.S.S.



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Senate

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By Mr. INOUE (for himself and Mr. FONG):

S. 1566. A bill to provide for the normal flow of ocean commerce between Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa or the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and the west coast, and to prevent certain interruptions thereof. Referred to the Committee on Commerce.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, early in this Congress, I introduced, S. 231, The Hawaii Public Interest Protection Act, to deal with the most critical problem affecting my State, our vulnerability to surface shipping interruptions. That measure placed a 60-day moratorium on the imposition of any shipping strike or boycott affecting the west coast-Hawaii trade and originating on the west coast.

Since the introduction of that measure, it has received a good deal of discussion and comment from concerned citizens, shippers, and others both in Hawaii and elsewhere in our Nation.

These discussions demonstrated a strong desire to add to the length of the moratorium and to include the island of Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territories, which have a similar problem, under coverage of such an act.

There was also a desire to draft a measure which would have the support of all members of our Hawaii delegation.

For that reason, I wish to introduce today, together with my colleague from Hawaii, Senator HIRAM FONG, a measure to be known as the Hawaii and U.S. Pacific Island Surface Commerce Act of 1973.

This measure extends that period of the strike moratorium to 160 days. It includes the islands of Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific under the provisions of the act. It applies to shipping stoppages originating at the west coast ports of Washington, Oregon, and California or upon the ships plying the trade to and from those ports and Hawaii and the other U.S. Pacific islands.

The justification for such a measure lies in our unique geography, which makes us so dependent upon a single mode of surface transportation, and in our unique vulnerability as a result of that dependence. We are not asking for special consideration. We are asking for special legislation to provide us with a degree of equity with the other States of the Union. They have trains, trucks, barges, ships, automobiles, and buses. We have but one mode of surface transport which carries 99 percent of all cargo by weight coming into our State.

We recognize that this act places some limit upon the right to strike or lockout the west coast-Hawaii trade. It leaves virtually unaffected, however, the economic forces through which labor-management differences have historically been resolved in free negotiation.

The Hawaii trade constitutes somewhat less than 3 percent of the dockside labor at the west coast ports. By adding the other U.S. Pacific Islands that percentage is increased to about 3½ percent.

Of the shipboard labor some 7 percent is involved. The carriers operating in the Hawaii trade constitute less than 13 percent of the voting power in the Pacific Maritime Association, the bargaining agent for management.

I believe in labor-management agreements freely arrived at. I believe that no settlement which is imposed from without, contrary to the wishes of either party, is going to prove a satisfactory and enduring agreement which will be faithfully implemented.

We have experienced 179 days of shipping stoppages in the Hawaii-west coast trade in the past 21 months. The cost of these interruptions have been not only significant but dramatic. While the cost of living nationally has risen at an excessive rate we in Hawaii have experienced an even faster increase in that cost. We have also experienced an increase in unemployment causing our unemployment to exceed the national average for the first time in more than a decade.

In January of 1972, I held hearings on a previous measure which I had introduced. These extensive hearings conducted by the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Subcommittee of the Commerce Committee heard testimony for a full 3 days in Honolulu. While it is most difficult to ascribe exact dollar figures to the damage, or exact numbers to the increased unemployed and to detail the specific businesses which went bankrupt as a result of shipping interruptions, it became most evident that the damage was of major proportions, that it was long term, that for many it was catastrophic, and that it was not limited to the period of the strike.

The very threat of a work stoppage forces excessive inventory building, increased storage costs, and higher prices for the people of Hawaii. On numerous occasions when there has been no actual stoppage in shipping the mere threat of such stoppage has cost the people of Hawaii dearly. Therefore, one of the key advantages of the proposal which I have introduced is the fact that it would secure the people of Hawaii from the heavy burden imposed by even the threat of a work stoppage over which they have no control.

I would like to make it clear to my colleagues that we do not seek security from all shipping stoppages. This measure does not apply to those shipping interruptions which originate in Hawaii and over which our labor unions and our management and the people in Hawaii have any direct influence. It does address itself only to those cases where Hawaii is held hostage to a dispute not of our making and beyond our ability to resolve. It does so with minimum interference to the normal forces and processes by which labor and management resolve their differences. It does so in a wholly workable manner and in a manner which is fair to both labor and management. Above all it does so in a manner which provides fair treatment for the people of Hawaii who are not direct participants in such a dispute.

Mr. President, I would expect that the above measure, the Hawaii and U.S. Pacific Islands Surface Commerce Act of 1973, be referred to the Committee on Commerce to which its very similar predecessor bill was referred earlier in this Congress.

Mr. President, I also join with my colleague, Senator FONG, in cosponsorship of another measure today designed to alleviate the problems resulting from our too frequent shipping interruptions. This measure provides for a common expiration date for all labor contracts affecting Hawaii-west coast surface shipping in the longshore and maritime trades. In providing for such common expiration dates and in providing a minimum 3 years duration for these contracts we will secure a degree of assurance in the continuity of the Hawaii-west coast trade which will be of major benefit to the people of Hawaii.

We have received assurances from management and from many of the labor unions involved that they look with sympathy upon such a development. We believe that even if it may be possible to get voluntary compliance with such a practice legislation will prove helpful. It will provide firmer guarantee against future interruptions of the frequency we have had in the recent past. I am personally hopeful that my colleagues will recognize our unique problem and our need for special legislative relief and support these measures.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

David K. Louge

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