

# Speeches and messages: 1974 (2 of 2): Population redistribution in Hawaii

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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# **Senator DANIEL K. INOUE**

SPEECH BY U. S. SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE

**topic:**

MAY 23, 1974

**date:**

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When my father was a young man at the turn of the century, the opportunities presented to him were limited. If he worked well in the cane fields, he could look forward to being promoted to section leader or supervisor.

My father was aware of this and wanted something better than being section leader or supervisor.

He thus convinced his parents of his desire for schooling and began his education at an age when most of us would have finished our eighth grade. His ambition was simple: with his newly acquired education, he could serve in the prestigious position of store clerk.

And at the time of his retirement, he served as manager of an important department within one of our major companies. Today, our State of Hawaii has as major sources of income, the vast tourist, pineapple, and sugar industries. These account for some 27.5 per cent of gross State income. There are other budding industries -- primarily in the service areas -- to service tourism. Additional ancillary industries, such as those geared to the manufacturing of Hawaiian attire, depend in large part on the tourism market. And there is the usual amount of business-type activity, such as corporate and banking enterprises.

It wasn't too long ago that many young people were content to look for gainful employment in the fields of our State, cutting cane or picking pineapple, or in local hotels, waiting on tables or entertaining tourists.

I do not wish to suggest that these are unimportant in the Hawaiian Islands. All jobs are important. All work effort is important. They are necessary to keep society moving. However, with the **expansion** of educational opportunities, with the opening of new career vistas, with the enticement

of science and commerce, we cannot be content with yesterday's usual job openings.

We must commence executive training in order to assure our graduates of fine job opportunities in local industries. Some will always be attracted to new opportunities abroad, and for many years, we have sadly noted the out-migration of some of our brightest young people. But, these new graduates represent our most important resource. It is one that we should seek to conserve.

Too often, our best and brightest have been attracted by the opportunities of the great research centers of our land. There they engage in scientific endeavors including research into the deepest recesses of the ocean floor or at the limits of outer space.

Attracted by the opportunities provided by international finance and commerce, we also have sadly observed that most have remained away. Few have returned to our Islands.

In order to reverse this trend, it is essential that Hawaii provide attractive opportunities to keep our brightest and most promising at home. We must address ourselves to the key question: how do we provide these attractions? How do we keep more of our able and adventuresome youth in Hawaii?

On the federal level, we have tried our best to attract to our State federal activities which take advantage of our unique location and topography. Hawaii is becoming an important scientific study center. Consider, for example, the observatory on Haleakala and the new joint U.S. -French-Canadian effort on Mauna Kea. On Kauai, the federal government has established a major undersea center involving anti-submarine warfare research. While such installations may not provide many jobs, they afford exciting opportunities to those inclined to explore this endeavor.

The foregoing are simply examples, but I hope that you have noticed one element of significance to all Neighbor Islanders: these federal centers have been established on various Neighbor Islands.

Just as we are saddened by the out-migration of young talent to the Mainland, those on the Neighbor Islands have been equally saddened by the out-flow of the young and ambitious to Honolulu. To the Neighbor Island high school graduate, Honolulu looms as the city of opportunities, bright lights, and promises.

But to the more discerning eye, this bustling center of Hawaii Nei is plagued by such by-products of growth and progress as overcrowding, crime, pollution, and bumper-to-bumper automobile traffic.

Permit me to cite some statistics:

In 1940, 258,000 persons of a total State population of 423,000 lived on Oahu--or 65 per cent.

In 1960, that had jumped to 500,000 persons among a total State population of 633,000 -- or 79 per cent.

And in 1972, an estimated 688,000 persons of a total population of 850,000 lived on Oahu -- that is 81 per cent.

I note that the population density on Oahu rose from 596 persons per square mile in 1950 to 1,144 persons per square mile in 1973. Oahu's density has almost doubled.

At the same time, the Neighbor Island population has declined -- a result of lack of opportunity that has led to further loss of potential for our young people.

I am certain that all of us view the out-migration of our youth with some alarm. I have cited several examples of what the federal government can do. On the other hand, there is much that the State government can do with relatively little effort.

I wish to discuss with you a proposal which while it has not been met with universal acclaim, ought to receive our most serious consideration.

At the outset, it is essential to note that Hawaii is one of the few States in the Union which has as its Capital its most populous city, that is, Honolulu. California chose not to locate its capital in Los Angeles or San Francisco, but rather, Sacramento. New York selected Albany over New York City. And in Louisiana, Baton Rouge -- not New Orleans -- is the center of State government.

None of these States has a massive concentration of governmental offices in one city. But in our State of Hawaii, the major branches of government, executive, judicial and legislative, are all located in Honolulu.

There has been only one previous attempt to decentralize State governmental activity. This, of course, was the proposal to relocate Oahu Prison to Maui. In that particular case, the employees of the prison were unhappy about the move, while the people of Oahu were pleased. On the Valley Isle, reaction to the proposal was mixed, with many opposed to the move. While we all agree on the need for prisons, few wish to have them located in their backyards.

In looking at other State agencies, I see no apparently compelling reason to maintain them all on Oahu. Although Oahu is not our primary agricultural Island, the Department of Agriculture nonetheless is located there. The Agriculture Department could move its central branch office to either Maui or Hawaii while establishing sub-offices on the other Islands. A move of this sort would provide a shot in the arm for a Neighbor Island. It would attract persons of different interests and talents, and would provide new job opportunities -- administrative, scientific, and technical.

The Department of Labor could relocate its main office to another Island and maintain an important branch office in Honolulu. Perhaps the Department of Social Services and Housing could follow suit. Each major Island could serve as the site of an important State department or function -- agriculture on one, labor on another, social services and housing on another.

Commuting would present no great difficulty. The furthestmost Island is less than an hour away by airplane -- a commuting distance perhaps even faster to travel than the drive from Wahiawa into downtown Honolulu during rush hour. By taking such admittedly drastic steps, the State would dramatically demonstrate its desire to bring about a better distribution of population. And through the process of decentralization, the State would act to provide viable employment opportunities for more of our citizens.

I might point out that not all federal activities are located in our nation's Capital. Social Security is located in Baltimore, the Federal Records Center

is in St. Louis, and so on. For too many years, we concentrated federal activities in Washington, D.C., but the trend has been reversed.

Those who argue against the feasibility of such a plan should also be reminded that similar arrangements have proved feasible in other States.

The movement of some governmental agencies would be accompanied by the movement of private enterprise to the Neighbor Islands, such as a law firm specializing in agricultural law which may find it beneficial to be located in the same area as the Department of Agriculture. In this way, major companies could be encouraged to establish main offices or important branch offices on Neighbor Islands.

Granted, such movement will not be sudden and may cost a considerable sum. But in the long term, such migration could produce savings. Decentralization may reduce the high costs of overcrowding while providing an improvement in the quality of life for all Islands.

The dictates of the job market place may compel you to eventually spend your life elsewhere, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, or Honolulu. Yet, I am certain that very many of you may prefer to spend your life on this beautiful Island. I, therefore, cannot overemphasize the underlying responsibility of State and County governments to come together to draft a sensible economic plan for the entire State of Hawaii--a plan that would include programs for dispersing over the State our population and our opportunity.

I propose that a study be conducted as soon as possible into the feasibility of relocating the Department of Agriculture to a Neighbor Island. I further suggest that this study consider the possibilities of relocating to Neighbor Islands other departments as well.

While we can guide government's location of activities, we cannot force businesses to move out of Honolulu to Maui, Hawaii, Kauai, Molokai, or Lanai. But we can provide to private enterprise certain incentives.

These include logistical support in terms of communication and transportation facilities. For example, the Island of Molokai is in the midst of a most distressing economic depression because of the decision by a pineapple company to cease operations on that Island. Transportation problems had much to do with the decision. A task force was created to study Molokai's job situation and suggestions have been made. However, if Molokai is to attract other new enterprises through which its citizens can reap unused agricultural resources, it must be able to provide logistical support, including expanded harbor facilities. I have been told that some wish to develop a refinery on Molokai, but that available power and logistical facilities are currently not sufficient to support it.

For many, the problems of population redistribution in Hawaii may seem almost insurmountable. However, if we are determined in our efforts toward reform, if we are sincere in our desire to make Hawaii a better place in which we and our children will live, then I believe that we will work together to solve this problem. We cannot be content to take a back seat and fail in our solemn duty to preserve what is beautiful and meaningful to our people of Hawaii.

I offer this population dispersal proposal for your consideration. It may alter what may already be a sequence of life experiences for you -- a sequence which may have been dictated by our failure to manage meaningful change.

With opportunities available to all of us here in Hawaii will come broadened career vistas for you far beyond those ever dreamed by our parents. May I wish you success in the years ahead.