

Speech to Hawai'i Federal Employees Metal Trades Council

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers

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CONGRESSMAN DANIEL K. AKAKA
SPEECH TO HAWAII FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
METAL TRADES COUNCIL
CATTLEYA ROOM, ALA MOANA HOTEL
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1977

MR. BRIAN HO, PRESIDENT: OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE
HAWAII FEDERAL EMPLOYEES METAL TRADES COUNCIL & GUESTS: ALOHA!

(Description of ordeal of getting to airport, missing
plane, rescheduling.)

I deeply appreciate the privilege of addressing all
of you today. My appreciation is highlighted by the strong
affinity (Ohana) I feel to all of you--for I come from
a labor background.

Back in the 1940s, I worked as a welder with the
Hawaiian Electric Company and the U.S. Engineers Department
--as a diesel engineer with the U.S. Corps of Engineers in
Saipan and Tinian--a mechanic with the U.S. Army at Sand
Island--and 1st mate navigator on the Morning Star VI
Schooner.

My father, Kahikina Akaka, is one of the oldest labor
union members in Hawaii. He joined the Moulders Union
back in 1912, serving as secretary of the Hawaii local while
employed by the Honolulu Iron Works. And my brother John,
who retired from the Postal Service, is presently vice
president of the Musicians Union, Local 677.

So you can see, my concerns for the working man and
woman come from first-hand experience. The many years
spent as a welder, diesel engineer, mechanic and navigator

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and the influence of a labor-oriented family have instilled in me the need for uplifting all workers.

Let me point out at this time that I think it would be to your advantage to study the history of labor so you may better understand the basic philosophies of the labor movement from its inception.

Labor has come a long way since trade unions first began in our country to organize employed persons for collective bargaining about wages and working conditions, and for promotion of the interests of union members. In nine more years, the American Federation of Labor will celebrate its centennial.

The principles of craft unionism and autonomy used by founders of the A.F. of L. back in 1886 started in their reaction against the practice of the Knights of Labor which had tried to organize a union of all workers by abolishing autonomous craft unions. But, as the Knights of Labor's strength faded away, the American Federation of Labor grew in wisdom and stature; and in the ability to win recognition of organized labor and to make progress in achieving better working conditions.

As organizations develop power, the issue of justice and fair play involving management and labor becomes more difficult and complex. And so, the ensuing years saw Congress passing major labor legislation and unions making major changes within their organizations.

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The 1930s gave birth to the National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act that set basic minimum wages and overtime pay.

With the 1940s came the Taft-Hartley Law, which put certain labor union activities under government surveillance--gave the President of the United States power to call an 80-day cooling-off period--outlawed the closed shop and payment by an employer for services not performed--prohibited one-sided union administration of health and welfare funds to which workers have agreed to contribute--and established the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

The merger of the A.F. of L. and C.I.O. came in the 1950s. All members of either federation became members of the new A.F.L.-C.I.O. Rights to full union benefits were guaranteed, without regard to race, color, creed or national origin.

Your union is one of the many locals existing across the face of our great nation--each with a life and work of its own.

Your union was born in the response of our forbears to the cry of the oppressed for help. As we continue to be sharers of suffering and pain of others, it is important that we share truth by good communication with one another, so that we can interpret things as they are--not only for the national or personal interest--but more important--for

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the human interest. Such communication calls for training, sensitivity, skill and knowledge, for your members will need to know what is going on, how to understand what is going on, how to interpret what is going on, so that the most balanced decisions can be made.

This Leadership Training Seminar you are attending provides a positive approach by your Council to increase your leadership ability. A training such as this exposes you to techniques in decision-making which gives each of you added perspective in viewing your jobs. Your Council should be commended for encouraging participation in this endeavor.

Within the past few years, we have witnessed the return of interest to blue collar work. Many have discovered greater satisfaction and pride in working with their hands and seeing the fruits of their labor. The American worker's dream is based on the pride that one has in his or her job and the ability to support him- or herself and family-- comfortably and with dignity--and in knowing that one can improve his status within his working environment if he works hard. It is this dream that we the members of the Congress of the United States hope to perpetuate and bring to greater fruition when voting on legislation.

The 95th Congress, in partnership with the new

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Democratic President, has moved to give new breadth to employee benefits. The House recently successfully passed:

--H.R. 4319 and H.R. 2931, both dealing with Health benefits;

--H.R. 6975, increasing by 100 the number of hearing examiner positions which the Civil Service Commission may establish and place in grade GS-16 of the General Schedule;

--H.R. 3744, the Fair Labor Standards Amendments of 1977, which among other things provides for increases in minimum wage up to \$3.05 in 1980; and

--H.R. 2931, the Hatch Act Reform, modifying restrictions on political activities of federal civilian and postal employees by repealing the prohibitions on candidacy or campaign participation by most federal workers in partisan political elections.

In an attempt to remedy many of the inequities of recent Civil Service Commission rulings as regards Cost-of-Living-Allowances, I introduced H.R. 3316. I am very much opposed to the unjust reductions in COLA brought about by what I view as faulty methods employed by the commission in their surveys. I will continue to do all I can to see that this issue is resolved.

(Description of swearing-in to Congress on Jan. 4, 1977; description of leadership; appointment to London Antarctic Talks; role in Farm Bill from beginning to end.)

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But Congress needs the strong support of all our citizens in order to give meaning to its programs. It needs your hands--your minds--your voices--all working in harmony to bring realization to its goals.

As I said earlier, the affinity--the Ohana spirit I hold for you and others like you--guides me in my deliberations. I ask all of you to search for ways to identify with all peoples in our great Nation--and when you find that common denominator, let your spirit of Ohana reach out to meet it. Maybe then, all of our thoughts can be as one, and we can move expediently toward making our great Nation, even greater.

I have enjoyed appearing before you this afternoon. This organization has strength--it has prestige--and above all, it has leaders and members who possess the great American dream I alluded to--pride in your work and pride in your ability to support yourself and your family.

Aloha Pumehana.

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ECONOMY/
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