

Chronological: Hotel/Restaurant Workers, Local 5, Honolulu, 1992-08-21

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
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STATEMENT BY U.S. SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
HOTEL AND RESTAURANT WORKERS
SHOP STEWARDS MEETING, LOCAL 5
ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 1992

America's workers, Hawaii's workers -- we're not lazy, and we're not finished. We are just "Bushed."

It took the President 533 days to acknowledge that our nation was in a recession. And it took the U.S. Senate three tries to extend unemployment benefits and avoid the "Big V" -- the Veto. Meanwhile, our unemployment rate is fast approaching 8 percent, and many states are into double digits. We are experiencing the worst recession since President Hoover's Great Depression.

The Congress just passed another version of the Family and Medical Leave Act. It is such a simple measure -- to allow parents to take unpaid leave to care for their child, themselves, or their parent. We should not force a choice between the family, and the livelihood to support that family. As I left Washington, I was advised that the President would probably "Return it to Sender," stamped once again with the "Big V."

The same is true for the Striker Replacement Act which would prohibit management from hiring permanent replacements for workers who exercise their right to strike. This measure is also very simple -- it restores the balance in the collective bargaining process. We, Democrats, can't even get the measure to the President for the "Big V." With one procedural move after another, Bush's Republican army has put up every road block possible.

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In accepting the Republican nomination in 1988, George Bush promised, and I quote, "30 million jobs in the next 8 years." I don't know about you, but I think we've been "Bushwhacked." And I, for one, am not about to wait around to see if he can make up the 12 million jobs he is already behind on. It's time we send Bush the "Big V."

Throughout my career, I have not been the great political philosopher. I am essentially a pragmatist. I am committed to Hawaii, and concerned about jobs, jobs, and more jobs.

Hawaii's unemployment rate jumped 1.6 percent in the past six months, due in large part to the tourism slump. The recession, which has plagued our nation for over a year, has finally come to our shores. And I refuse to be "am-Bushed" in Hawaiian waters.

We must work to bring our visitor counts up. I am very pleased that the major airline carriers have agreed to cut their Hawaii bound fares by about 30 percent. As you recall, they cut their fares earlier this year, but left Hawaii out. I strongly expressed my dissatisfaction, and requested their reconsideration. I am very pleased that they did.

We must now work vigorously on our promotion activities. But that takes money. I wish to report to you that about a week ago, the Congress sent a new tourism measure to the President. It will recommit ourselves to promoting tourism, as a coordinated part of our nation's trade policy. This follows upon my authorship of the measure that created the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration in 1981, and required "tourism" to be designated as a national trade priority. This new measure will provide grants to states and counties to promote our premier resort and leisure destinations abroad.

I wish to discuss another matter which I was heavily involved in about five years ago -- a convention center for Honolulu. At the time, most visitor industry leaders fully recognized the special value of conventions. Hawaii was already host to many conventions. However, with the right facilities, Waikiki could become a hub for national, Pacific Rim, and even international conventions. Oahu would clearly become "The Gathering Place."

In 1986, I worked with the Department of Defense to secure the Fort DeRussy parcel at a fraction of its appraised value. I continue to believe that it would have been an excellent site -- there is sufficient land for a convention center and for parking, and it was in walking distance to Waikiki and many of the hotels.

As many of you may recall, there was a loud uproar -- "Leave the land open, leave it green." The people turned it down. It is a lost opportunity.

The city and the state have looked at other sites, neither of which seem to have much chance of success. Interestingly, several business leaders have recently come back to me, inquiring about the possibility of resurrecting the Fort DeRussy deal. However, the Army has forged ahead to further develop its resort complex on the parcel. In the end, in all likelihood, there will be no "green space," and unfortunately, no convention center.

I hope that there can be a rejuvenated and sincere discussion of a convention center for Honolulu. It can set the long-term stage to ensure the future success and prosperity of Hawaii's tourism industry.

We have to grab every opportunity, and get a jump on the competition. If we don't help ourselves, no one else will. If it is going to take federal dollars to preserve our place in the sun, and to keep our visitors having fun in the sun, I will deliver it. If I could bring you the entire "Kalua Pig" -- I would. I make no apologies. I have no regrets. This, I believe, is my responsibility and duty to you. And do you know why?

I am tired of having Hawaii workers relegated to the "Bush League" -- the Minor League -- while we lose our pineapple industry to Thailand where labor is cheap and environmental protections virtually non-existent.

I am tired of being relegated to the "Bush League" while Hawaii's world class sugar is sacrificed to Mexico as an incentive to get a free trade agreement.

I am tired of being relegated to the "Bush League" while our jobs are flowing South, Southeast, Northwest -- anywhere but home -- and then to be called non-competitive and stagnant.

I say to President Bush -- you may prefer cheap labor, but don't take us cheap. We've got your number, and we're ready to retire it. Let's bench him for good. That's the only way we will reach the Major League.

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