

Undated: Drafts: Omnibus housing legislation

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
Speeches, Undated, Box SP1, Folder 12
<https://hdl.handle.net/10524/71463>

Items in eVols are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

UHM Library Digital Collections Disclaimer and Copyright Information

DRAFT

It has been a month since President Johnson rode down the streets of Honolulu to address some 5,000 of our local citizens from the steps of Iolani Palace. It was an historic occasion, done as an honor to Hawaii. The President had already announced his intent to step down from his high office in the coming election. It was official business as President of the United States that brought him here. He had consented to speak because of a deep sense of identification with Hawaii. ^{It should be remembered that} It was largely through his influence as Majority Leader of the Senate that Hawaii was successful in its final bid for Statehood. It was this fact that figured largely in his decision to participate in the program to which he had been invited.

It is, therefore, with the utmost embarrassment and chagrin that I witnessed the spectacle which took place that afternoon at Iolani Palace. About ~~100~~³⁰ "peace" demonstrators appeared carrying placards with a giant portrait of Ho Chi Minh. There were others reading, "Go, Go, Viet Cong", "Did Jesus ever use Napalm?", "Burn Candles, Not People", "Geevem, Stokely", "McCarthy is our Man", ect. Throughout the program, the group heckled the proceedings; one person used a bullhorn. Several times the President was actually interrupted in his speech. Those who had come

to listen understandably were disturbed and in their efforts to quiet the hecklers, inadvertently contributed to the commotion. It was a rude and unprovoked ^{verbal} assault. *on our President,*

I am discussing this because though such events seem out of place in Hawaii with its traditions of hospitality, they appear to have become the regular order of the day in other sections of our country. We have witnessed the protests of the flower children with their long hair, beards, their costumes, their acid and pot. We watched with amazement as the affluent Berkley students protested. We have noted with surprise the protests against the Vice President, The Secretary of State, the Secretaries of Defense and of Agriculture, and our Ambassador to the United Nations. We have been appalled by the wild and savage riots in Watts, Detroit, Neward, and Washington, D. C., and a dozen other cities. We have been fascinated by ~~There have been hosts of~~ other protests: for integration, against integration; on poverty; the draft; civil rights; campus issues, that the news of another has almost become old hat.

How ~~must~~ we view these protests? What is their signifigance?

Whatever we may think about ~~these~~ protests, there can be no question but that dissent is important to a free society. No elected official, no Agency of Government, no majority of people, no single economic society or philosophical group within a community can be sure that, if given the opportunity, ^{it} ~~they~~ could govern to the satisfaction of all. The greatest insurance of wise government comes with the right of the individual to talk back and to have his opinion considered. For this reason, this Nation's Founding Fathers deliberately divided the powers of government and set one branch against another. Congress and most State legislatures have two Houses, and each of these is further divided by party and seating arrangement--all to generate dissent for testing the soundness of legislative proposals. Our Judicial system, from the lowest trial courts to our Supreme Court, relies on dissent as the best means for determining Justice. The Administrative Branch engages in unending dissent as ^{it} attempts to adapt laws to cases. Outside of government, ^{too,} dissent is a distinguishing feature in all ^{our} policy making whether it occurs within a family, a club, a church, a corporation. ^{It is} The widespread acceptance of dissent in our society ~~is the thing~~ that keeps us free. We know that properly used, dissent will keep our institutions, government or otherwise, young and responsive, ever changing the new needs and circumstances.

But there is a great difference between dissent and protest. Dissent is an orderly process. It consists of talk in which proposals are pitted against one another. Dissent assumes that people will listen and consider an opposing argument. It assumes that an ultimate goal will be a mutually satisfactory compromise which the minority will abide by once it has been reached.

Protest on the other hand, is more action than thought. It resists alternatives. There is a pessimism about protests for it is assumed that alternatives are futile. Protests encourage excitement and inflame the passions which open the doors to violence. No matter how elaborately a society has organized the channels by which dissent may be employed to update its laws and customs, these channels will be of no value if they are not used.

I do not say our political and social organizations are sacred in themselves. Institutions can grow old and lose their usefulness. Nor do I claim that our own institutions have always served us well. The great struggles for human justice are far from won and our institutions are composed of men. But I do insist the means by which laws and institutions can be changed are abundant. They exist in the election process. They are found in the courts or through the Administrative channels or within the orderly procedures of the churches, the unions, the associations, the thousands of

clubs and organizations that make up the group life of this nation.

Furthermore, I insist that there is abundant evidence that one of our institutions, The Federal Government itself is indeed responsive to changing times and circumstances as evidenced by Medicare, our Community Actions programs, civil rights legislation, Federal Aid to Education, Water and Air quality legislation, Housing, and the list of social reforms go on and on. These dramatic strides have come in response to changes in public opinion, changes which have been registered through the channels that our society has established for processing dissent and for making it into a usable commodity for the national community.

Nevertheless, the mounting protests and violence we are experiencing are indictments on every citizen of this nation and upon its institutions. They indicate that however much has been done, it has not been enough. They show that our institutions have harkened too much to the selected interest of their membership but have hardened their hearts to the needs of great masses of people who have had no organizations, no institutions, no one to hear and voice their needs. Through the poverty program and through awakened conscience of our churches and the backing of unions, we have made progress in this area, but this progress has

D

been too slow and too little. But it must also be recognized that those who engage in aggressive protests have also failed. Civil disobedience attracts attention, but it does not yield lasting results. To change our institutions, one must work from within them. It is easy to function as an out-group, to criticize and destroy, but it is difficult to build and bring into harmony the conflicting forces which always are at play in a free society. When protesters turn to civil disobedience, they prejudice the majority, not only against themselves, but against their cause, they lose what they set out to gain.

For this reason I am disappointed when I see people who are well educated who sometimes are adults and should know the consequences of their acts, behave in irresponsible ways, I fear for the young people who are drawn through their idealism into premature but nonetheless far reaching commitments.

Responsible men, even those who sympathize with the goals for which the protesters strive, are appalled by excesses. They know they hurt, not help the cause, and they fear that the divisiveness which results will deteriorate faith in the democratic process.

I am remembered of what happened in the German ~~Republic~~ Weimar

Republic in the months prior to Adolf Hitler's seizing the reins of government. Hitler had instructed his lieutenants who were elected to the Reistag to destroy the parliamentary processes, to yell, demonstrate to ridicule in the general sessions and to break up the meetings. People laughed at their rudeness, or became terribly insensed, but the strategy worked. Eventually enough German people, a bare 1/3 majority, became sufficiently disillusioned with the democratic process to cast their votes for Nazi candidates. Hitler took over the government and that was the end of both free speech and democracy in Germany.

I know that today we have men of national repute who for political reasons are willing to exploit the unrest and the divisions in our country and to ingratiate themselves with dissent elements by indulging in irresponsible criticism and character assassination. I may be old fashioned but I still think there is a place in this modern age for respect...Something valuable is threatened in a society which no longer affords common courtesy to the symbols of our Nation. I hope the day never comes when the type of spectacle we witnessed here last month becomes common place throughout the Nation.

These are days of stress and concern for us all. Established values, modes of operation are being challenged and this is as it

should be if we are to make progress. I think it is important, however, that we do not lose sight of what this nation is all about: Everyday in its life is an experiment in self-government, a testing of whether the forces which hold it together are greater than those which pull it apart. We can never hope to satisfy everyone in a democracy, but we can have some hope of workable compromises if the available avenues of dissent are used, and kept responsive. I urge that we not become disillusioned with our experiment in self-government. This is a time for faith and patience. X

I am confident that in good time, "We Shall Overcome".