

TRIUMPHANT PLUTOCRACY

The Story of
American Public Life
from 1870 to 1920

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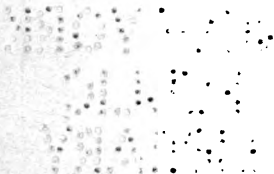
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XXII. HAWAII—A REVOLUTION TO ORDER

During the years of my acquaintance with American public life, I have seen the center of power move from Washington to Wall Street. When I first entered the Senate they talked of the "invisible empire of business." During the nineties that empire ceased to be invisible—it came out in the open, and through its representatives and attorneys on the floor of the Senate and the House it fought its battles for privilege and plunder—fought them and won them.

The plutocracy established its right to plunder the people of the United States. Through the banks, the railroads and the trusts, it robbed them openly and shamelessly, and those few of us who fought on the side of the people and against these masters of privilege, were driven out of public life for our pains. Laws aimed to promote the general welfare were not so much as considered in Washington. The work of Congress was, first and last, to protect and safeguard the interests of big business.

I saw this thing and faced it. I fought it in the Senate during twelve years with all the strength and ability at my command, and when those twelve years of struggle were ended, the business power was immeasurably stronger than it was when they began.

The real strength of big business came over the issue of imperialism. The right to plunder at home had been pretty firmly established by the time the Sherman Law was passed in 1890. The right to plunder abroad had never come up for serious consideration.

From 1870 to 1890 the business interests of the United States were busy building railroads, opening mines and establishing factories. Even as late as the nineties there were only a few of the business groups that were looking outside the country for a chance to exploit and rob. Among these few were the sugar men.

The United States has never provided its own sugar supply. The sugar business is a profitable one, how-

ever, and the American business men made up their minds that if profits were to be made in sugar they might as well have them.

The fight turned on Hawaii.

The Hawaiian Islands have a climate well adapted to sugar-growing and the soil, a deep volcanic ash overlying boulders, is the best sugar-cane soil in the world. In Hawaii they raise eight tons of sugar to the acre.

Hawaii was owned by foreign capitalists among whom the Americans were the largest single holders.

I had an investigation made when I was in Hawaii of the books of the interior department, for their law required that every sugar corporation should file a report giving the names of the stockholders. All of the corporations did not comply with the law, but several did comply. I had their reports studied and from them it appeared that the holdings in sugar corporations, arranged by nationality, were: American, \$3,225,750; British, \$1,642,350; Hawaiian, \$792,000; German, \$458,700; and Portuguese, \$1,200, making a total of \$6,120,000. In short, more than half of the sugar plantation values were American owned.

The estimates of taxable property in the Islands showed that the Hawaiians, who numbered together 39,504 individuals, owned taxable property to the amount of \$8,101,701, while the Americans, British and Germans, 6,768 in number, owned taxable property to the amount of \$26,701,908. The "foreigners," while numbering only one-seventh of the taxpayers, owned more than three-quarters of the taxable wealth in the Islands.

Foreign economic interests on the Islands were paramount, and it was these interests that fostered the Revolution of 1893. I need not go into this matter in detail, as I have elaborated on it elsewhere (The Course of Empire, Chapter V). Let it suffice to say that the United States Minister, resident at Honolulu, entered into a conspiracy with a few business men and their representatives for the purpose of overthrowing the

native government, and deposing the reigning queen. As a part of this conspiracy, the United States Minister used American marines to protect the conspirators while they organized a government, which was immediately recognized by the United States Minister. A treaty, based on this disgraceful incident, was sent to the Senate of the United States for ratification on the recommendation of President Harrison, and was reported favorably by the Committee on Foreign Relations.

The report of the Committee on Foreign Relations did not tell the facts regarding the overthrowing of the Hawaiian Government; neither did the message to the President transmitting the treaty give the essential facts, and it was with great difficulty that the facts were obtained. But the infamy of the whole transaction was finally disclosed and, after a great many months of controversy, the treaty failed to command the two-thirds vote necessary for its ratification.

I was the leader of the fight in the Senate against the treaty and its ratification. The question excited widespread attention. Most of the great newspapers were outspokenly in favor of ratifying the annexation treaty. They filled their columns with false headlines on the subject, and even resorted to the practice of making up press dispatches purported to come from the Islands. Despite all their efforts, however, the treaty could not pass.

There is no longer any dispute over the material facts of the Hawaiian Revolution.

What were the essential facts behind the revolution that led the United States to make its first annexation of non-continental territory. There is no longer any serious dispute concerning them.

George W. Merrill, who was our Minister to Hawaii, wrote Mr. Secretary Blaine, September 7, 1889, as follows:

"It is also noticeable that among the American residents here there are several who, from personal

motives, contemplate with satisfaction periodical disquietude in this kingdom, hoping that frequent revolutionary epochs will force the United States Government to make this group a part of its territory and to absorb into its body politic this heterogeneous population of 80,000, consisting of Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, native Hawaiians, half-castes, and only about 5,000 of those who may be properly denominated the white race.

"In order to keep affairs in as much turmoil as possible, baseless rumors are constantly put in circulation, many of which find publication in other countries."

This was from our minister who was superseded shortly afterward by Mr. Stevens. Mr. Stevens was appointed minister in October, 1889. Harrison had been elected President. One of the issues of the campaign was free sugar. The McKinley Act became a law August 27, 1890. On August 20, 1891, Mr. Stevens wrote to Mr. Blaine as follows:

"The probabilities strongly favor the presumption that a United States warship will not be pressingly necessary in the two or three immediate months. But as early as the first of December, without fail, the month preceding the election, and for some time thereafter, there should be a United States vessel here to render things secure. . . . There are increasing indications that the annexation sentiment is growing among the business men. The present political situation is feverish, and I see no prospect of its being permanently otherwise until these islands become a part of the American Union or a possession of Great Britain."

Here, then, is our minister, accredited to a friendly government, contemplating the destruction of that government and the annexation of its territory. Further on, in his next dispatch, he asked the State Department to keep secret his statement in regard to the overthrow of that government; and he says in the

dispatch that it would be uncomfortable for him if the facts were known in Hawaii.

On November 20, 1892, Stevens again writes:

"I think it understating the truth to express the opinion that the loss to the owners of the sugar plantations and mills, etc., and the consequent depreciation of other property by the passage of the McKinley Bill, has not been less than \$12,000,000, a large portion of this loss falling on Americans residing here and in California.

"Unless some positive measures of relief be granted, the depreciation of sugar property will go on. . . .

"One of two courses seems to me absolutely necessary to be followed, either bold and vigorous measures for annexation, or a "customs' union," and ocean cable from the Californian coast to Honolulu, Pearl Harbor perpetually ceded to the United States, with an implied, but not necessarily stipulated, American protectorate over the islands. I believe the former to be the better, that which will prove much the more advantageous to the islands, and the cheapest and least embarrassing in the end for the United States."

Here, in 1892, two months before the final revolution, our minister outlines the reason for it and advises annexation as a remedy for the situation. This statement of Minister Stevens is supplied by ample evidence published in the official investigation which President Cleveland caused to be made of the whole situation.

The American Minister had been converted into an advocate of the overthrow of the friendly government to which he was sent; and what was done by these conspirators, few in number, having vast wealth—fortunes made absolutely out of the people of the United States in the profit upon sugar? The American Minister having been secured, the next step was to find an excuse for overthrowing the existing government.

On the 14th of January, 1893, being Saturday, the Queen took steps to promulgate a new constitution. Petitions had been received by her signed by two-thirds of

all of the voters of the island, protesting against the Constitution of 1887 and asking that a new one be promulgated. The Constitution of 1887 deprived a large per cent of her people of the right to vote for members of the Senate or any voice in the government. The Constitution left the control of the country in the hands of the foreign business men and the people resented it.

Immediately on the proposition being made to adopt a new Constitution, nine business men had a meeting in Smith's office. Smith was a lawyer in Honolulu. Later, he became an attorney-general of the so-called republic. There they began to plan and plot for the overthrow of the Queen. But, finding that there was opposition to her movement, the Queen abandoned the idea of issuing a new Constitution and, on Monday, January 16, 1893, she issued a statement to that effect.

On Saturday, the 14th, a committee of safety composed of thirteen members had been organized at W. V. Smith's office. At this meeting the feeling was expressed that this was a good time to get rid of the old regime and provide for annexation to the United States. There was no fear of disorder, no thought that life and property were in danger.

Mr. Smith stated that the committee at his office debated whether they would ask the United States to establish a protectorate. They concluded that as the Queen had an armed force it was best to appoint a committee to see the United States Minister, and ascertain what he would do.

After the meeting, Smith went to see the American Minister and arranged with him as to what should be done if Smith and his conspirators were arrested. He secured the required assurances and the call for troops was issued.

These conspirators then held a public meeting and Thurston made some lurid remarks—talked about freedom, etc., and about liberty and tyrannical government—and after his fiery speech they passed the

tamest sort of resolutions embodying their protest against the new Constitution, but said not a word about overthrowing the government or establishing a new government.

At every step in the proceeding great care was taken to consult the American Minister and to know just what he should do in case the conspirators were arrested. There was a great sense of fear and apprehension of danger on the part of these thirteen men only. All honest citizens felt safe and secure in life and property.

Troops were landed from the United States gunboat in the harbor, and distributed, not for the purpose of protecting Americans or American property, but to guard the government building and show the Queen that they were assisting the revolutionists. This was Monday evening. On Tuesday morning the Committee of Thirteen met again and signed the proclamation declaring the establishment of a new government, and about two o'clock started, in two parties on different streets, to go to the government buildings, now guarded by United States troops, to read the proclamation, according to a previously arranged plan with our minister.

Without a single armed man they proceeded to the government building and, in front of it, within seventy-five yards of the 150 marines landed from the United States vessel, they proceeded to read the proclamation declaring that they were the government. They, however, took the precaution to go in two parties, one party going up one street and the other party another street, so as not to attract attention. They took the precaution to send one of their number up to see if there were any armed men likely to interfere.

The proclamation having been read at the government building, guarded by United States troops, the United States Minister proceeded at once to recognize the new government. They had not an armed man—they had proceeded to the government building where

there were clerks and officers of the Hawaiian Government, with not even a policeman present. They stood up in front of that building within seventy-five yards of the Gatling guns of the marines from an American battleship, and read a paper declaring that they were the government. Three-quarters of a mile away the Queen had five hundred men under arms and, without waiting, the moment they read the proclamation our minister recognized these thirteen men as the government of Hawaii—without any armed forces whatever, knowing that he had violated international law and violated the precedents followed by all civilized nations, and he undertook to falsify the facts.

He claimed that he recognized the government after the Queen had surrendered—after the old government had given up—after she had abdicated and said that she would submit her case to Washington. An investigation of the facts proved that this statement is false.

After the recognition of this so-called government, before the surrender of the Queen or the armed forces which she had, a delegation was sent to her and she surrendered to the armed forces of the United States, saying:

“I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose minister plenipotentiary, His Excellency John L. Stevens, has caused the United States troops to be landed at Honolulu and declared that he would support the said provisional government.”

To avoid collision and bloodshed, she submitted the question to the Government at Washington, surrendering to the armed forces of the United States; surrendering after Stevens had recognized the so-called government; surrendering because she was told that the Government of the United States, whose people she had always been taught to reverence and respect, would do justice and restore her to the throne, and they cited a precedent in Hawaiian history as a justification for this claim:

“On the 10th of February, 1843, the British frigate

Carrysfort, commanded by Lord George Paulet, arrived at Honolulu and showed displeasure by withholding the usual salutes.

"He proceeded at once to take the King prisoner and make such demands upon him that he surrendered his crown on condition that the question would be submitted to the British Government. The "History of the Hawaiian People" says:

"Under the circumstances the King resolved to bear it no longer. 'I will not die piecemeal,' said he; 'they may cut off my head at once. Let them take what they please; I will give no more.'

"Dr. Judd (he was an American) advised him to forestall the intended seizure of the islands by a temporary cession to Lord Paulet, pending an appeal to the British Government. The event proved the wisdom of this advice.

"On the next day the subject was discussed by the King and his council, and preliminaries were arranged with Lord Paulet for the cession. On the morning of the 25th the King and premier signed a provisional cession of the islands to Lord George Paulet, 'subject to the decision of the British Government after the receipt of full information from both parties.'

"At 3 o'clock p. m., February 25th, the King, standing on the ramparts of the fort, read a brief and eloquent address to his people."

Then they submitted the question to Great Britain, and the English Government promptly restored the King to his throne, refusing to accept an usurpation of that sort. So, in this case, the Queen, having in mind this historic incident, said:

"I, Liliuokalani, by the grace of God and under the Constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and constitutional Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom by certain persons claiming to have established a provisional government of and for this kingdom.

“That I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose minister plenipotentiary, His Excellency John L. Stevens, has caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu and declared that he would support the said provisional government.

“Now, to avoid collision of armed forces and perhaps the loss of life, I do, under this protest, and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the actions of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.”

When Kamehameha, in 1843, surrendered and ceded the islands to the British admiral, because he could not resist the force of an armed ship of war, the English Government promptly repudiated the act and restored him to the throne; and when Queen Liliuokalani, deprived of her authority by the armed forces of the United States, proposed to submit the question to this Government, she had good reason to suppose that the great republic would preserve its honor and dignity among the nations of the world and restore her to the throne. Yet, in the face of these facts, the treaty made with this revolutionary government of business men was passed by the Congress of the United States and this country took title to Hawaii against the will of the majority of the people in that country.

On January 31st, thirteen days after the revolution, President Dole wrote Mr. Stevens that his government could not maintain itself, and asked for the protection of the United States troops. Stevens complied, and our flag was put up, over the public buildings, and remained up until April 1, 1893, when Mr. Blount ordered it taken down. If there was a government that had been able to create and establish itself and to maintain itself with an armed force, why was it that thirteen days afterwards they begged of Mr. Stevens, admitting their impotency to maintain their government, to again land the troops of the United States

and put the United States flag upon the buildings? This was done on the 31st of January, and the flag remained there sixty days. The flag went up in dishonor. When it was raised under such circumstances it was a disgrace to the Republic.

During the sixty days while our flag remained upon this building, the provisional government brought in foreign mercenaries from San Francisco, collected an armed force, gathered up every gun upon the islands, passed the strictest penal laws against the importation of guns, and made it a criminal and penal offense to have a gun. The so-called republic was surrounded by armed men. Back and forth in front of the public offices marched men with Winchester rifles.

The new government proceeded rapidly to enact laws. It consisted, not of a legislative body, but of nineteen men, self-constituted, supported by our armed forces. They provided that no one should be eligible to be a senator, a representative or a juror until he should have subscribed to the following oath or affirmation:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm), in the presence of Almighty God, that I will support the constitution, laws and government of the Republic of Hawaii; and will not, either directly or indirectly, encourage or assist in the restoration or establishment of a monarchical form of government in the Hawaiian Islands."

On the 31st an act concerning seditious offenses was published. This law made it an offense to speak, write or print anything which might bring hatred or contempt against the government. On the same day was published a law prohibiting the importation of firearms and ammunition without first obtaining the permission of the government. On the same day an act relating to contempts became law: "Any person who shall publish any false report of the proceedings of said council, or insulting comment upon the same," etc., was liable to imprisonment for thirty days.

What did this revolutionary government do? It set up a republic! For nearly a year after the government

was created they had no constitution. But after a year the nineteen concluded to organize the Republic of Hawaii. Such a republic was never known to history before. An election was called for a constitutional convention. The call provided that the people who would take an oath to support their government might elect eighteen delegates to the constitutional convention. The revolutionists, nineteen of them, constituted themselves members of the convention without any election, making the election of delegates absolutely a farce. What kind of a constitution did they adopt? Their constitution provided for an oligarchy. It provided that the government should consist of Mr. Dole as president—he was named in the constitution—who was to hold office until the year 1900, a senate of fifteen members and a house of representatives of fifteen members, and the senate and house sitting together were to elect Mr. Dole's successor president after the year 1900, but no successor was to be elected unless he received a majority of the senate; and, if no successor was elected, Dole continued to hold the office.

Under this constitution no person could vote for a senator unless he was worth \$3,000 in personal property or \$1,500 in real estate, according to the last assessment for taxation, or unless he had an income of \$600 a year.

These provisions shut out everybody in the Hawaiian Islands from the right of suffrage except the sugar planters and their fellow business and professional men. Such a qualification would have disfranchised ninety per cent of the voters of the United States.

The constitution created a council of state, five of whom were to be selected by the president, five by the senate and five by the house of representatives; and this very constitution provided that a majority of the council could do business. Then it provided that they could make laws and appropriations when the legislature was not in session, and that their laws and their

acts and their appropriations should hold good until the last day of the session of the legislature.

They put into the constitution a provision for a union, commercial or political, with the United States. Did that come from the people? They had no voice in it. The constitution was not endorsed by the people or submitted to the people. After this self-constituted convention had adopted its constitution, it declared the document the constitution of the Republic of Hawaii, and never submitted it to a vote at all. And yet it was from this gang of sugar-raising conspirators that we took the islands.

The annexation of Hawaii was the first big victory won by the business interests in their campaign to plunder outside of the United States. It was the precedent that they needed—the precedent that made easy the annexation of Porto Rico, the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Treaty, the conquest of the Philippines and the other imperialistic infamies that have sullied the good name of the United States during the past twenty years.

When I entered this fight against the annexation of Hawaii, I had a vague impression of the power that could be exerted by big business. The fight lasted five years, and when it was ended, I had a clear, full knowledge of the methods and the strength of the American plutocracy. I entered the fight, knowing that it would be a hard one. I left it, wondering that we had been able to hold off the interests for as many as five years.