

THE  
HAWAIIAN QUESTION.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO

Secretary Gresham,

BY

EX-COMMISSIONER

CHARLES L. CARTER.

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HONOLULU, H. I., November 30th, 1893.

*To the Honorable W. Q. Gresham,*

*Secretary of State,*

*Washington, D. C.*

SIR:—

With the consent of the Government which I had the honor to serve as Special Commissioner to the Government of the United States, I have the honor to address you in reply to your dispatch to the President, dated October 18th last, containing a recommendation that the treaty of annexation be not resubmitted and suggesting the restoration of what you term "the legitimate Government" of Hawaii, by which you mean the monarchy in the person of the ex-Queen Liliuokalani. You will pardon my making this communication publicly, and I beg you to attribute my action to the apparent disinclination in your Department to a full exposition of the matter bearing on our question which has been at your disposal,

I regret that up to the time of our latest advices my distinguished colleague, the Chairman of the Special Commission, Mr. Thurston, has been constrained by his present position as the representative of this Government near your own from making any public declarations. This fact, and because after your installation in the Department of State until shortly before Mr. Thurston's appointment as Minister I was the only representative of Hawaii actually in Washington, give me the freedom to speak and qualify me to address you on some of the matters in your dispatch.

Your communication to the President contains twenty-seven paragraphs, and the charges therein which I can meet and which, in this my first, and probably only opportunity, I shall refute, I shall for convenience take up in successive order.

Paragraph One.—You allege therein that the opposition of her Ministers and others induced the Queen speedily to change her purpose of proclaiming a new constitution, and that she made public the announcement of the fact. The fact is that

after a most violent altercation with her ministry the Queen publicly announced that for the present she deferred action on the matter of a new constitution. It was pretended that she wished to take the action as a consequence of a petition to that effect by her native subjects. Credible persons present in the throne room during almost the whole of that Saturday afternoon state that the humble petitioners waited with their unread petition up to the time that the Queen made her declaration of postponement, and that she had not read the document, which has since disappeared. The best evidence obtainable indicates that the proposed constitution by its terms was an aggression upon the constitutional rights of the white residents of Hawaii, whether born here of parents also of Hawaiian birth, as I was, or settled and established here by long residence. No announcement of absolute change of purpose was made until Monday, two days later, when her advisers discovered that the popular wave of indignation was sweeping toward the throne, and hoped to stay the just wrath of the people.

Should not the Queen's other political crimes of that same Saturday be considered by you? Was there nothing offensive, not only to us but to *your* people in the lottery and opium bills? Nothing characteristic in the disappearance of the Chinese Registration Act? These things and the removal of the Jones-Wilcox Cabinet are a part of the nation's charge against her. For my own part I can never forget or forgive the spectacle of the deciding vote in favor of the lottery bill—the member who up to that date was pledged against the measure, too drunk to hold up his head during the debate, with a wreath of flowers about his neck, said at the time to have been placed there by the ex-Queen at the moment of his promise to support her plans, after having been plied by her with intoxicating drink, voting unsteadily *in favor* of indefinite postponement until corrected by his neighbors, because he had promised to vote "yes" and was not in a fit condition to follow the course of legislative action. *Her offenses cannot be brushed aside in a paragraph nor recited in one.*

Paragraph Two.—The meeting in Honolulu which appointed the Committee of Public Safety, on my motion to that effect, consisted of those persons who had gathered at the call of Her Majesty's Cabinet and had pledged their lives in writing in defense of that Cabinet against the proposed aggression of the Queen, the members of that Cabinet having made an appeal for support, stating that they could not rely upon the constituted

civil and military forces, whose leaders were pledged to support the Queen and assist her in promulgating the new constitution. That Committee was appointed less than fifteen minutes after John F. Colburn, the Queen's Minister of the Interior, had concluded an address to the meeting by saying, "Gentlemen, we recognize that as a Cabinet we have absolutely no support; if you will stand by us we will stand by you," and for the express purpose of assisting that Cabinet in protecting the public against the regular military and police, who were recognized as opposed to the peaceable and orderly element of the community.

Paragraph Three.—The Committee of Public Safety held its first meeting immediately after its appointment, the representative body of citizens upon whose resolution it had been nominated withdrawing for the express purpose of allowing it to hold an immediate session, and the sessions continued almost without interruption until the organization of the Provisional Government was proclaimed on the afternoon of Tuesday, the 17th.

Paragraph Four.—The aliens referred to who appointed the Committee of Public Safety, and from among whom that Committee was chosen, and who constituted the massmeeting of Monday afternoon, the 16th, were, it is true, not *all* of Hawaiian birth; were not *all* men who had amassed fortunes here, but every individual was of undoubted integrity and a *bona fide* resident of these Islands, pledged to the country's welfare and fully mindful of the rights of the native aborigines, whose united interests and actions made them a body which might well have shaken a more stable throne.

Paragraph Five.—I have no reason to doubt the veracity of the statements in this paragraph, and in addition thereto I ask you in justice not only to the living, but to one of your country's distinguished dead, to explain that while Mr. Stevens on the Saturday before had consented to allow the Queen's Cabinet to use your forces as against her and those behind her, when that Cabinet violated its pledge and clove again to Her Majesty and her cause that he positively declined to allow the Committee of Public Safety, which then became a revolutionary body, any support or assistance, and that that was the understanding of the Committee of Public Safety from noon of Sunday, the 15th?

Paragraph Six.—I saw the troops landed at 5 o'clock on Monday, and it was not until nearly 9 o'clock that evening that they secured and were installed in Arion Hall. It was midnight before even the hasty and inadequate sanitary precautions for

their comfort were completed. I know of my own knowledge that attempts were made by the Minister and Captain Wiltse to secure other accommodations for the men, which were refused, and that no attempt was made to secure any accommodation until after the troops were landed and the necessity for their remaining on shore over night became apparent. The "old armory" might possibly have been used, but that had already been secured from its owner as a rendezvous for the revolutionary forces of the Committee of Public Safety, although a circumstance which arose later, to which I will refer, rendered a very moderate use of it sufficient for the purposes of the Provisional Government.

Paragraph Seven.—That there was no particular reason for locating the forces at that place ought to be apparent to you from the fact that as soon as the commodious premises afterward known as "Camp Boston" could be arranged the men were moved. Can it possibly be your idea that the main body of troops landed under general instructions from a distinguished predecessor in your present office of your own political party for the protection of American interests should have been stationed at some great distance from the probable scene of violence? They were wisely and centrally located in the only available shelter.

Paragraphs Eight and Nine.—Concerning the alleged correspondence between the Governor, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Stevens and his allegedly evasive replies, I have not a knowledge of which I may make use here, but information on those points is available to you and you have the right to use it.

Paragraph Ten.—That there were no manifestations of excitement or alarm in the city on that Monday night was due to the fact that the American troops were on shore. Up to the moment of their landing the agitation and uncertainty were intense. If any of Mr. Blount's witnesses have made statements to the contrary I should like an opportunity to cross-examine them. As it was, there were two attempts at incendiary fires at different times and in different parts of the city which, but for the prompt appearance of Lieutenant Swinburne and a squad of men might have increased to alarming proportions. To imply in the same paragraph of your report that the Committee of Public Safety entered the Government Building as soon as the forces were landed is grossly misleading, and had you given me the opportunity which I so frequently asked in Washington of making

a detailed statement of the occurrences of that time I cannot believe that you would have fallen into the error. The troops landed at 5 o'clock on Monday, the 16th, and the Committee of Public Safety seized the Government Building at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, nearly twenty-four hours later. It was I who entered the building half an hour before the Committee, because it had been rumored that there was a guard concealed therein. I found none. There were eight Government officials and clerks in a building which ordinarily teemed with the ministers, judges and some forty or fifty officials and clerks. I was told that the Cabinet had left the building. The Queen's adherents had neither the character nor ability to resist. I was afterward told by Marshal C. B. Wilson, then in charge of the Queen's civil forces, that they had left the building because they were afraid of their lives, well knowing that to be the point which the revolutionary forces would attack, and that but for their cowardice or their treachery, the Marshal did not know which, in refusing to allow him to send a guard to that building we would not so easily have secured possession; that he had concealed ammunition in the foreign office, which was indeed afterward found there, and that it was his purpose to send men there prepared to use it. The Proclamation was read as soon as the building was surrendered by the highest official in charge thereof, and as soon as the order of the Provisional Government calling for support from loyal citizens was issued one hundred and fifty or more armed and determined supporters, who had rendezvoused at the old armory, marched to the building and were stationed as guards to defend and protect the new Government. While they were gathering there was some anxiety and Mr. Damon asked me to seek out Captain Wiltse and ask for an armed guard. I objected, because we well knew that we could expect no such assistance, but finally went and was not surprised when Captain Wiltse peremptorily refused.

Paragraph Eleven.—Is it suspicious because a revolutionary party, confident of the support of the community at large, in possession of the principal Government building and the Treasury, finding itself unopposed after ample notice had been given and time for an attack had elapsed, should have assumed and undertaken to inform not only Mr. Stevens but the other representatives of Foreign Governments, as set forth in this paragraph, that the monarchy had been abrogated and a Provisional Government established? The prompt recognition of the new status from all the Foreign Representatives ought to

satisfy you on this point. The adherents of the Queen, when the building was seized, huddled themselves into the police station, and I learn from the Queen's Marshal, C. B. Wilson, whom you describe as a resolute capable officer, who tells me that he made the same statement to Mr. Blount, that there was a violent difference between himself and the Queen's Cabinet as to which should have control of her cause, that they prevailed and refused to allow him to make any attack upon the revolutionists or to resist when the demand for surrender came.

Paragraph Twelve.—Before any recognition had come, while I was present in the chamber in which President Dole had established himself, Mr. Pringle, one of the junior officers of the *Boston*, obtained admittance and stated that he was Mr. Stevens' aide and had been sent to ascertain by personal observation whether the Provisional Government were in fact in possession and established as set forth in its request for recognition.

Paragraph Thirteen.—How soon after this event, which was somewhere in the neighborhood of 5 o'clock, the formal recognition, acknowledged by Mr. Dole, as set forth in this paragraph, was sent I do not know. This was the status. The Queen's Cabinet, in response to the demand for the surrender of the station house, had sought an interview with Mr. Dole, which was readily granted. After some parley, in which their absurd proposition that their forces and those of the Provisional Government combine to keep the peace during the night was refused, they had acquiesced and surrendered, making a verbal protest against the Provisional Government, which was agreed should be extended later. They had asked that Mr. Damon accompany them to the Palace in order that they might explain the surrender to the Queen. Mr. Damon had not returned. The request for the immediate support of the United States forces, contained in Mr. Dole's letter, of itself should indicate that up to that moment there had been no such support, and furthermore was intended only for that night and for the purpose of patrolling the town. *Can it be possible that you have not been informed that the reply to that request was a second absolute refusal from Captain Wiltse?*

Paragraphs Fourteen, Fifteen and Sixteen.—*The Queen's protest was a quibbling trick*, which now makes clear to many of us what we then considered her cowardly surrender. Marshal Wilson assured me in an interview in May last, and told me he

had given Mr. Commissioner Blount the same assurance, that he knew, while in charge of the station house that day, that the American troops would not and could not interfere; that he had this knowledge from Captain Wiltse; that he urged an immediate attack upon the revolutionary Government and demanded to be put in control of the Queen's forces; that her Cabinet was paralyzed by fear of their personal safety and declined to allow it. Learning that the Queen had indicated her intention to surrender, he sent her a message at eleven o'clock and another at one o'clock advising her by no means to yield; that he was finally notified by her that she had surrendered, and that he must deliver up the possession of the station house, which he did. The protest of Queen Lihoukalani was accepted with indifference as indicating her objections to retiring from that power which she had so ruthlessly abused, and which she had hoped to increase by violence until it became absolute. That the tricksters who prepared it for her signature incorporated therein a wanton lie operates as no estoppel upon the Provisional Government and no bar to its onward progress toward liberty and clean Government. *National affairs, Mr. Secretary, are not controlled as are the litigations in courts of law. The acceptance of a protest by the Provisional Government, without an express denial of its contents, does not preclude them from establishing and maintaining the mighty truths that inspired their cause.* Furthermore, I am sorry that you have not heard that that morning at seven o'clock Mr. Damon went to Her Majesty, courageously renounced his allegiance and told her he had consented to join a movement which had for its object the abrogation of the monarchy, to which she replied that she had learned of the movement, had been advised and had decided to submit. This is the circumstance which made the old armory superfluous as a rendezvous and justified the Committee of Public Safety in seizing the Government building without armed force.

Paragraph Seventeen.—An examination of the whole of Secretary Foster's communication of February 15th to the President will prove that your scanty quotation is not consistent with the facts, and the statement, if made, was never made for the purpose of deceiving or concealing the truth. The open candor with which Mr. Foster conducted his share in the negotiations for annexation is in marked contrast to the reticence that has prevailed for the past few months, and is a sufficient guarantee that he could have had no such purpose.

Paragraphs Eighteen and Nineteen.—You speak of the

Special Commissioners sent to Washington by the Provisional Government to negotiate a treaty of annexation, and you say, "the<sup>se</sup> statements are utterly at variance with the evidence documentary and oral contained in Mr. Blount's report." *Those Commissioners had no opportunity from you to make any statements.* You absolutely and persistently evaded any opportunity for that purpose. Commissioners Wilder and Marsden were the first to leave Washington, which they did about the time of the inauguration. Mr. Castle stayed but a few days longer, having but one interview with you, in which you declined to say whether or not you cared to have the Commissioners, as a body, remain in Washington. When Mr. Castle left, Mr. Thurston went to Chicago, and I was alone in Washington, where I remained for two months. You constantly declined to allow me an interview for the purpose of making a statement for the Commissioners or on behalf of the Provisional Government. At the interviews which we did have you pointedly evaded all the attempts which I made at giving you a statement, once going so far as to interrupt me by rising from your seat, excusing yourself and abruptly leaving the room. The day that the news reached Washington of the lowering of the flag I called upon you and asked you if the report were true. You stated that you had no official information on the subject, but assumed that the newspaper dispatches were correct and asked me whether in my opinion the course followed by Mr. Blount would be likely to lead to bloodshed or violence in Honolulu. I replied to you that the Provisional Government was amply able to take care of itself, and that there would be no danger unless the lowering of the flag were the first step toward the restoration of the Queen. You stated positively that there was no intention of restoring the Queen, a statement which you repeated at one of my last interviews with you at the same time that you told me that you expected Commissioner Blount to return to Washington in June.

Paragraph Twenty.—Be good enough, Mr. Secretary, to give Admiral Skerrett an opportunity to explain whether he ever made a bald statement so ruthlessly condemning the action of one of your naval commanders. Otherwise what I have already said disposes of paragraphs twenty-one and twenty-two.

Paragraph Twenty-three.—You speak of earnest appeals to the American Minister for protection by the officers of the Provisional Government and consider them a confession of weakness and timidity. The fact that we continued without that aid after it had been twice refused after we were in possession ought to

show you that that band was composed of "courageous men conscious of their strength and the righteousness of their cause."

Paragraph Twenty-four.—You state that it is now claimed "that a majority of the people who had the right of voting under the Constitution of 1887 have never favored the idea of annexation to this or any other Government." *You now approach the ground upon which I admit you have the right to speak, and concerning which this Government confidently assumed and were allowed to believe Mr. Blount was to report.* You repeat statements by Mr. Blount that he did not meet a single annexationist in Honolulu who expressed the willingness to submit the question to a vote of the people, or one who did not insist if the Islands should be annexed suffrage should be restricted. In one of the interviews with you, in which a few hasty expressions were allowed me, you did ask how I thought a vote on the question of annexation would result. Do you recollect my answer? I told you on behalf of the Commission and the Government which it represented that the natives were children, that they had even violently opposed the Reciprocity Treaty with your Government until more than a year of prosperity led them to acquiescence, that if the question of monarchy were left out the country would be unanimously for annexation, that if the issue annexation or monarchy were put to the people the result would probably be very close, that I would not like to predict precisely which way it would go, but that I desired to be candid and would confess that owing to a dangerous element of low whites who had the right to vote, and who in recent years had acquired great influence over the Hawaiians, the probable result might be slightly in favor of the monarchy, but I said to you, "If you test the question by the brains, intelligence and property of the community, instead of by counting noses, annexation would prevail overwhelmingly." These, however, are matters which have absolutely nothing to do with whether or no the monarchy was deposed by the active intervention of officers of your country. Furthermore, there has never been any official statement to your Government, and you have not the right to make the Provisional Government responsible for any other on the question of future suffrage that has suggested any restriction which should not relate to both white and native residents. My own opinion was always freely given that until universal suffrage could be restored there should be none in Hawaii for any one.

Paragraph Twenty-five.—In this you dispose of the question

of annexation, and in the remaining two paragraphs suggest the restoration of the monarchy. I regret exceedingly that neither you nor Mr. Blount ever listened to any statement from me of the events from January 14th to the 17th. My own part in the revolution was inconspicuous, but I was fortunate in being present at almost every step that led to the establishment of the Provisional Government, and feel amply qualified to give an accurate account of them.

With assurances of the highest consideration

I have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES L. CARTER.



