

# Waihee administration pushed sovereignty

**O**LDER Hawaiians didn't start the Hawaiian sovereignty movement; younger ones did, people now in their 40s — Gov. John Waihee's generation.

I talked to him last week about the progress since he became America's first Hawaiian-blooded state governor eight years ago.

Frankly, he said, much of what has been accomplished would have been considered impossible in 1986. I agree. It will be left to others, however, to play the game out.

Waihee points out that it won't be as simple as setting up something like an Indian reservation on the U.S. mainland. Here 20 percent of our people are involved versus no more than 3 percent in any other state. Further, neither the involved populations nor the involved lands are contiguous to be easily set apart from the rest of the community. That most closely resembles the situation of the Cherokees in Oklahoma City. And usable land here is scarce.

Waihee thinks there are many issues to be sorted out, some of them deliberately confused by people seeking to promote their causes.

Unlike today, older Hawaiians had statehood as their hope. As a national committeeman, David K. Trask, the grandfather of today's activists, Haunani Kay Trask and Mililani Trask, helped lobby the first statehood planks into Democratic national party platforms.

In the 1940s, the senior Trask, like Honolulu's venerable part-Hawaiian mayor, John H. Wilson, felt bygones were bygones as far as the 1893 overthrow of the monarchy was concerned. "All the buggers who ought to be hung are dead," Wilson once told me.

They saw statehood as a way to improve the lot of all Hawaii's people, including Hawaiians. To calm Hawaiian nervousness about the Hawaiian Homes program's future, a compact was created to preserve it subject to amendment or



## HAWAII'S WORLD

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LBS 11/17/91  
PA 20

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Governor Waihee and his contemporaries were school children when statehood was achieved in 1959. Like young Japanese Americans taking up the cudgels for restitution and apologies to their elders for World War II internments, young Hawaiians looked at the past and were more inclined than their elders to do something about it. Statehood handed them a bigger stick.

Waihee, then 32, was a leader among those who pressed the 1978 state constitutional convention for an Office of Hawaiian Affairs with trustees elected from a new Hawaiian-only voter roll and to preserve traditional Hawaiian rights. Euphoria over OHA's creation has been succeeded by frequent criticism of its administration and some activist assertions that it is nothing but a pawn of the state.

As governor, Waihee helped our congressional delegation win a federal apology for the illegal 1893 overthrow and for reversion of the island of Kahoolawe to a future Hawaiian nation with \$400 million to clean up its dangerous debris.

His Office of State Planning has started to deal with the complicated matter of future disposition of the "ceded lands" that belonged to the monarchy. They comprise one-third of the state — with one-fifth designated by the

Statehood Act to go to <sup>native</sup> Hawaiian uses.

Waihee has won for OHA a \$129 million settlement for ceded-land rents due since statehood and assured it future annual income of \$10 million or more.

He at last may have the Hawaiian Homes program on track to put thousands of Hawaiians in homes in the next few years. He got it \$180 million for improvements to lots and gave it by executive order 16,500 additional acres, some of them of very good quality for home and commercial development. This restores — and with higher quality land — the 203,500-acre total mentioned when the trust was created in 1921. Homes employees now are paid by the state instead of from land revenues.

A process to sue for past breaches of trust has been established. Waihee is working at the close of his administration to estimate what the state's post-statehood liability may be before asking the federal government, through the Interior Department, to accept pre-statehood liability.

He considers culture and history to be as important as blood in Hawaiianness. He is proud of the student self-esteem and parent involvement that are part of the new immersion schools that do all their teaching in Hawaiian.

Next year a plebiscite among Hawaiians here and out of state on their sovereignty attitudes will be taken by the Hawaiian Sovereignty Elections Commission. *council*

Restitution for Hawaiians under Waihee has moved as remarkably as he claims. He is content that his controversial gesture of letting the Hawaiian flag fly alone over the capitol complex during the centenary of the overthrow was fitting in its context.

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