



Bruce Babbitt  
12/13/99 10:41 AM

To: EXSEC/OES/OS/DOI@DOI  
cc:

Subject: Forwarded From Secretary's E-Mail



jtmcna@ark.ship.edu on 12/13/99 10:33:49 AM

To: Bruce Babbitt/SIO/OS/DOI@DOI  
cc:  
Subject Hawaii  
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Dear Secretary Babbitt,

I recently read a story in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin about Assistant Secretary Berry's address to a Native Hawaiian conference. I disagree with the tone of his address. I lived in Hawaii for a couple of years in the 1990s and have some knowledge of the state. I am also a historian.

First, it does not correctly reflect the situation on the ground in Hawaii to act as though many people in Hawaii want a native Hawaiian government. Any realistic appraisal of the situation will recognize that only a minority of even the Hawaiian nationalists would expect that sort of arrangement.

Second, one should be careful of completely accepting the Hawaiian sovereignty movement's version of the history of the overthrow. There is more than one way to interpret those events and the Hawaiians have no corner on truth. Even if mainland Americans were fully (and I mean fully) informed of the history in Hawaii, there is no reason to believe they would come to the conclusion that secession is the right move.

Third, Berry implied that it is just a constitutional technicality keeping Hawaii bound "unjustly" to the Union. It is not fair to anyone concerned to encourage even a flicker of belief that the United States would vacate Hawaii, any more than we would vacate Arizona, or New Hampshire, or Florida. Much more so than Hawaii, many other American states were taken in a manner viewed by many as unjust and by conquest.

In my American history survey course, we have just finished the Civil War. I can imagine Lincoln spinning in his grave on hearing John Berry's comments and the implications derived from them. The issue of secession was settled in 1865.

Finally, I fully understand the need to deal with native Hawaiian people with respect and generosity. But this also means dealing with them realistically and engaging their argument, pointing out its inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Contrary to what appears to be now department policy, the Hawaiian situation is very much like that of the American Indians - except the islands were not taken by conquest. The virtual absence of resistance is an important fact. Hawaii is not like the Philippines but is much more like Texas.

In the future, I hope the Interior Department will work to head off, rather than encourage, these ideas of independence.

Best regards,

John T. McNay  
Assistant Professor  
Shippensburg University