

The AMERICAN LEGION Weekly

October 27, 1922: p. 5



CITY OF HILO AND SNOW CAPPED MAUNA KEA, HAWAII.

Will the Hyphen Win in Hawaii?

The Middle of the Pacific Ocean
Has Developed Our Most Critical
Americanization Problem

By Nathaniel Peffer

THE American mind is much absorbed just now in what is known as the Americanization problem. It is troubled by the thought of the unassimilated masses of aliens in the nation's midst and the effect this must have on the nation's future. As it happens, however, the Americanization problem is most serious and most pressing, not in New York or Boston or Chicago or any other large city or on the American continent at all, but two thousand miles out in the Pacific in what Mark Twain called "the loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean" — the Hawaiian Islands. There, significantly, the Americanization problem turns on what is also America's most serious foreign problem, its relations with Japan. I can state the problem in a single sentence. Forty-four percent of the population is Japanese and nearly half of those are Hawaiian-born and therefore American citizens.



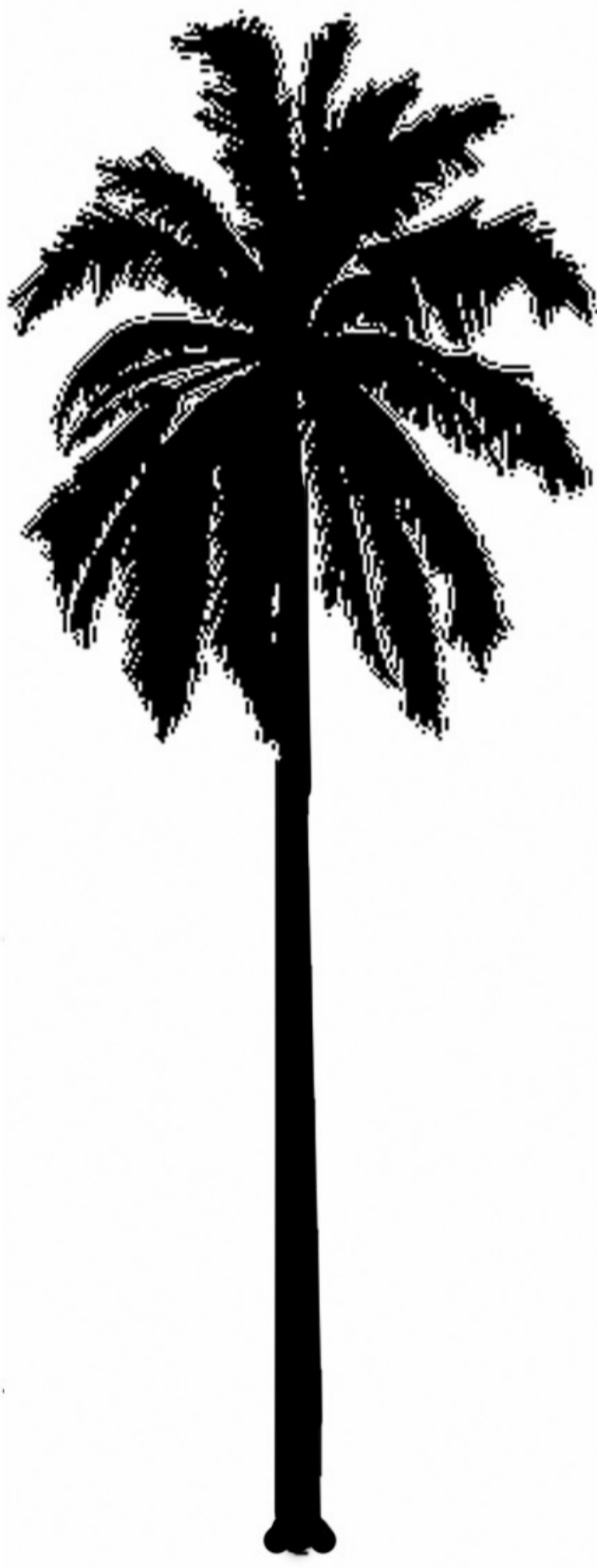
Most Americans, doubtless, look on Hawaii and its charming capital city, Honolulu, as a romantic and exotic spot out somewhere in the distance and remotely connected with America as the source of a one-time devastating flood of popular songs and an improper

OldMagazineArticles.com

1920s Hawaii

dance called the hula-hula and a curious musical instrument called the ukulele. One hesitates to estimate the proportion of Americans who do not know that Hawaii is American soil at all, let alone the setting of a serious American problem. It might be well, therefore, to set down a basis of facts essential to an understanding of the situation.

Hawaii is a group of islands two thousand miles southwest of San Francisco which became American territory by annexation in 1898. There are five main islands; Oahu (on which is Honolulu), Hawaii, Kauai, Maui and Molo-kai. The islands are small in area and have a population of only 255,912, but their significance is out of all proportion to size and population. Militarily, politically and economically, they are of immense importance. Situated in the middle of the Pacific, commanding the main travel routes between the United States and the Far East, Hawaii is a prime factor in all considerations of naval strategy. A few miles from Honolulu is the great American naval base at Pearl Harbor. Hawaii cuts off practically all approach to America from the Far East by any hostile fleet. In the possession of any other power it would be a jumping-off point from which the American coast could be raided effectively. Its economic importance lies in the fact that it is one of the large sugar producing centers of the world, exporting annually more than half a million tons of raw sugar. Its total annual exports to the United States proper run to nearly \$200,000,000. Its political importance is obvious as the key to the command of the Pacific up to our very doors.



White men, principally Americans, first began to come to Hawaii a hundred years ago, and since then

1920s Hawaii

The beach at Waikiki, with Diamond Head, defending the American naval in the background

there has been a steadily increasing ascendancy of American influence. On his lovely tropical islands, where nature was benevolent and sustenance came easily, the native Hawaiian was easy-going, thriftless, careless of the morrow, and happy. He had and still has little stomach for work and even less concern for what white men call development. He was willing to leave that to the white settlers. The white man's keen eye for prospects saw promise in the islands and he set to work realizing on it. Towns were established, agriculture was developed, a handsome shipping trade was built up, there was an increasing flow of imports and exports. Life took on the kind of complexity we know in Europe and America; and all that called for government.

For that also the Hawaiian was fitted neither by temperament nor experience, and affairs came into European and American hands. First as advisers and then as officials, Americans took a larger and larger part in government. The nineteenth century was the period also of general imperialist expansion, and ambitious glances were directed at Hawaii from more than one quarter. Probably if Hawaii had not been annexed by America it would have come into the possession of some other power. At any rate, it was annexed by America as part of the eastern movement of American interests in connection with the Spanish War. That this came about largely through the influence of the Americans in the islands is indisputable and the circumstances surrounding it make a long and complicated story full of controversy. That is no longer important, however, for in 1898 Hawaii was formally annexed and in 1900 given the status of a territory under the constitutional provision for territories.

The production of sugar absorbed most of the energies of the Americans and sugar has determined the direction of events ever since. It does now. Just as they were unsuited for the rôle of executives, so also were the native Hawaiians unfitted for the

1920s Hawaii

laborer's hard part; and the growing and harvesting of sugar is as back-breaking labor as men know. There arose in consequence a labor problem. For this there could be no solution but immigration, and for fifty years the movement of population in the territory has been the record of increasing experiments in organized, government-fostered labor importation from all parts of the globe.

First South Sea islanders were tried, but they proved unfit for plantation labor. At various times efforts were made

to bring in Europeans — Russians, Germans, Spanish and Portuguese. These, too, proved unsuccessful for various reasons. The Portuguese have been most nearly successful, and of them there are still some 25,000 in the territory, but they did not stay on the plantations long. They went into agriculture for themselves or into higher forms of labor or left for California. The other Europeans in the main went back home or left for California. By some it is maintained that labor on sugar plantations in a tropical climate is too hard for white men, by others it is said that the white laborers left because they were not well enough treated, being underpaid and housed in uninhabitable quarters. Only from one part of the world was labor importation successful. That was from the Far East.

First came the Chinese, 182 of them being brought in as contract laborers in 1852. They were followed by others in larger numbers until there were 21,000 in the territory. Then their immigration was prohibited. This prohibition was made final when Hawaii became part of American territory and fell under the jurisdiction of the American law excluding Chinese. By far the greatest immigration, however, has been from Japan. The Japanese began coming in the latter part of the century, the first entering as contract laborers by arrangement with the Japanese government. They proved suc-



KAMEHAMEHA AVENUE, HILO, HAWAII.

cessful, and between 1884 and 1909, when all Japanese immigration into American territory had been stopped by the Gentlemen's Agreement between Japan and the United States, 143,000 Japanese had settled in Hawaii. To this day sixty percent of the field labor on the sugar plantations is Japanese. Since 1907 Filipinos and Porto Ricans also have been brought in, but the Philippines government is opposed to Filipinos leaving their own islands, and Porto Ricans have not been satisfactory. Thus the need of the sugar planters for labor has been met, but a menacing social problem has been created.

A True Melting Pot

THE result is the Hawaii we have today. It comes nearer to being a real melting-pot than any other part of the United States, with all of the picturesque that carries with it. There is scarcely a race or nationality not represented. In the few blocks that make up the business section of Honolulu, which might pass for the business section of any small American town of 10,000, you will be jostled by men of all colors from all climes in all manner of costumes and talking innumerable languages — Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Samoans, Filipinos, Porto Ricans, Americans, Britons, Russians, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese, and mixtures of two or more of these. In a recent report on Hawaii issued by the Federal Bureau of Education is a picture of thirty-two girl pupils of one Honolulu school, the Kawaihāo Seminary. Among them are a Hawaiian, a Japanese, a Chinese, a Korean, a Russian, a Hawaiian-Chinese, a Hawaiian-Filipino, a Hawaiian-German-Irish, a Hawaiian-Japanese-Indian, a South Sea-Norwegian, a Samoan-Tahitian, a Hawaiian-Russian, a Hawaiian-Japanese-Portuguese, a Hawaiian-Portuguese-Chinese-English, a Guam-Mexican-French. A study of racial intermarriage in the islands shows almost every possible combina-

1920s Hawaii

tion, with the noteworthy fact that the Japanese alone among all the peoples there have with but a few exceptions not intermarried at all.

If you go to Aala Park, one of the small open spaces in a crowded quarter of Honolulu, you will see a kids' baseball game in progress—on one side two or three Hawaiians, a white or two, a Chinese, a Japanese, a Portuguese, and on the other two or three Hawaiians, a Korean, a Filipino and two or three that are mixtures of Hawaiian and Chinese or Filipino or American. You will hear baseball slang with Chinese and Japanese modifications and coaching from the sidelines in an exotically flavored English, while in moments of high excitement encouragement is shrieked in the various native tongues. In picturesqueness of population it would be difficult to think of a more fascinating city than Honolulu, and this is the brighter side of the Hawaiian situation.

Put in figures which tell their own story, this is the make-up of Hawaii, according to the 1920 census:

Hawaiian	23,723
Caucasian-Hawaiian	11,072
Asiatic-Hawaiian	6,955
Portuguese	27,002
Porto Rican	5,602
Spanish	2,430
Other Caucasian (includes all whites)	19,708
Chinese	23,507
Japanese	109,274
Korean	4,950
Filipino	21,031
Negro and other	658
Total	255,912

Up to two years ago you found in Hawaii not only picturesqueness but amazing success in achieving racial harmony. Much of Europe and Asia was packed into a square block or two and dwelt together in amity. It was the proudest boast of the Americans there that they, six thousand miles from the city where America had its birth, were working out better than in America itself the great American experiment of the melting-pot. Their pride was greatest in their manner of dealing with the Japanese question. Whereas California had worked itself into a state of fury over Japanese immigrants and brought on international complications, in Hawaii, with a much larger proportion of Japanese, there were the pleasantest of relations. Hawaii was proving that Japanese and Americans could live together in concord and to mutual advantage, even

1920s Hawaii

Japanese laborers in the pineapple area

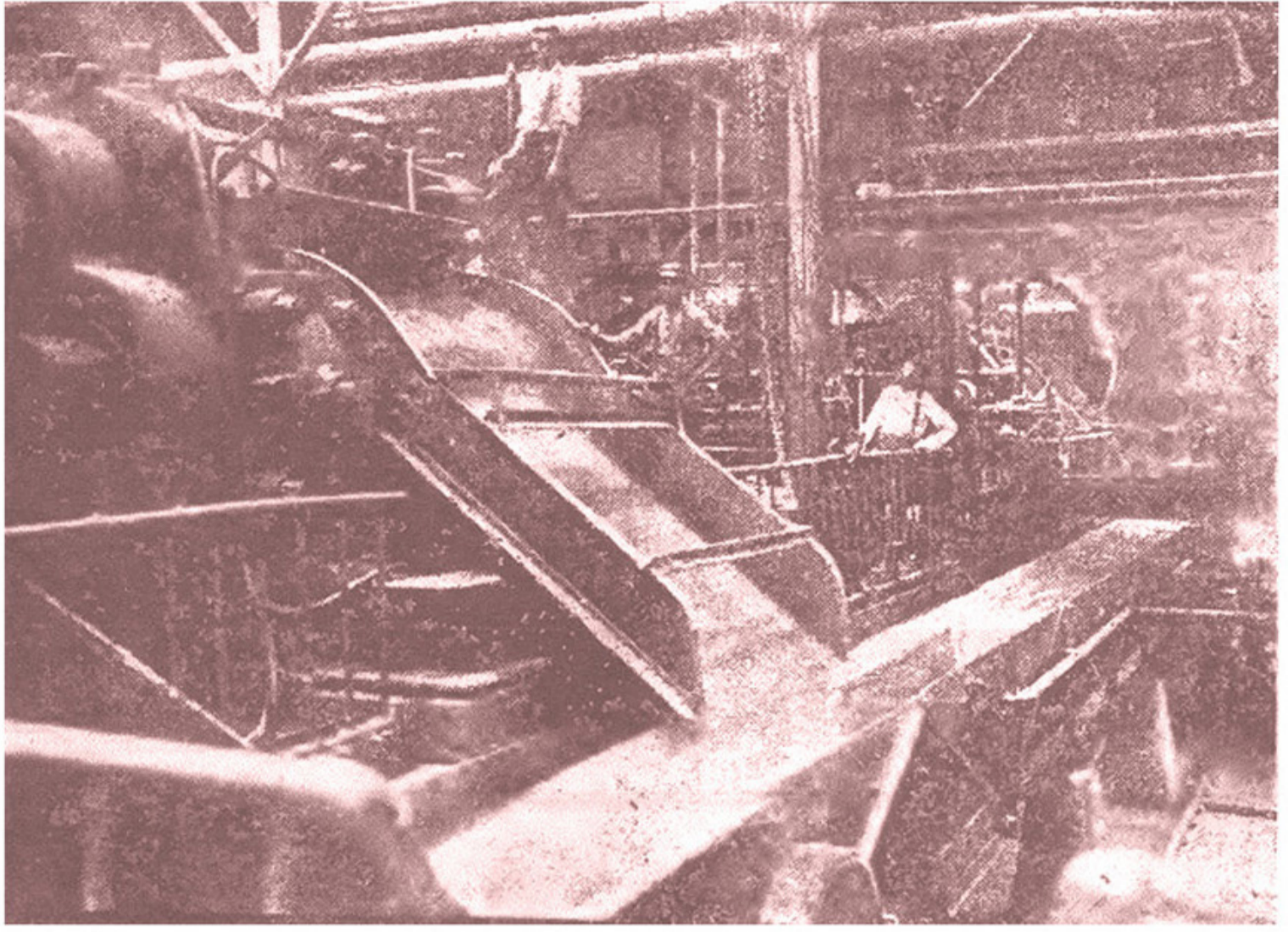
that Japanese could be Americanized.

That was two years ago. Today the sentiment of the Americans is substantially the same as in the Pacific Coast States, though there is less acrimony. The issue is nevertheless just as clearly drawn. You now find an American official representative from Hawaii testifying as follows to a Congressional committee in Washington:

With funds in amounts never before possessed by them, the Japanese, who think and act collectively, are provided with capital for their collective use in acquiring control of industries at present owned and controlled by Americans. That they intend to secure such control is demonstrated not only by their disinclination or actual refusal to be employed by American-controlled industries but also by their several specific attempts to purchase the control of some of these industries.

And a Japanese professor of the University of Hawaii is quoted as saying to a meeting of Japanese businessmen: "The complete solution of the Japanese question will never be reached until American-born Japanese exert their influence in political circles."

What has happened to bring about the change? First, there has been the inevitable reflection in Hawaii of the strain that has developed between Japan and the United States generally. The outcry in this country against Japan's imperialistic aggressions in the Far East and the resentment of the Japanese at the outcry and America's acts in obstruction naturally have produced friction between Japanese and Americans everywhere. It has been so in Hawaii, too, of course. But this has been only an indirect and intangible factor in Hawaii. There the real cause lies in a strike that broke among the Japanese workers on the biggest sugar plantations in January, 1920. During and after that strike there was a complete reversal in the sentiment of



Interior of a Hawaiian sugar mill.
Two of the three workers shown are
Japanese

Americans in the territory. It is not exaggerating to say that the same men who before the strike said there was no race problem in Hawaii and that Japanese could be made good Americans declared after the strike that the Japanese were a menace to continued American control of the territory and must be curbed by one means or another. On both sides all the potential resentments have begun to smoulder, if not to flare. The issues of the strike are confused and in themselves not particularly important. The important fact is the result it produced, the fact that it brought the whole Japanese question to a head. The strike marks a turning point in Hawaii's history.

The strike was called on all the plantations on the island of Oahu in January, 1920, and lasted six months. The merits or demerits of the strikers' demands are of lesser interest, for it was the manner in which the strike was conducted and what it revealed rather than the demands that affected the result. There was disclosed for the first time the compact racial solidarity of the Japanese community. The original motive of the strike may have been economic, but there seems little reason to doubt that it was fought racially. Not only the sugar workers, but the Japanese press, shopkeepers, bankers, teachers, artisans and servants worked in a single unit. Every kind of community pressure was brought to bear to whip all Japanese into line. The more extreme of the American anti-Japanese even maintain that orders in connection with the strike were communicated from Japan. Considerable sabotage is charged against the strikers and their allies, and even after the strike, it is charged there has been deliberate soldiering on the job and the Japanese are deliberately inefficient in order to ruin the properties of the Americans.

Furthermore—and this may be the

1920s Hawaii

most significant — efforts have been made by Japanese to purchase control of a few sugar plantations. Americans interpret this as a sign of Japanese challenge for economic control of the islands in the same way as they have wrested control of certain industries in California. In Hawaii to control sugar would be to control the islands. The strike is over, but the resentment is not; apparently it has just begun.

It would be erroneous to say that all this originated with the strike. The strike only served to bring it to the surface. What are the underlying facts? The census for 1920 shows 109,274 Japanese out of a population of 255,912. The Japanese consul-general's figures, which because of the more careful official system are probably more accurate, show 114,000, or approximately 44 percent of the population. That is four times as many as there are of any other one nationality in Hawaii and five times as many as all the whites, Americans included. It is as if there were 48,000,000 Japanese in the United States. More important, of the 114,000 Japanese, 49,016, according to the census, were born in Hawaii and are American citizens. Therefore they have the vote.

Now, Hawaii is a territory of the United States. Its status is that of any of the present States of the Union before they were given statehood. Its governor is appointed by the President, and acts passed by the territorial Legislature must be approved in Washington. Otherwise it is autonomous. It has locally-elected administrative officials. It has a locally-elected Legislature which virtually makes the policy of the territory. The members of the Legislature and all other officials not federally appointed are elected by universal suffrage.

As the figures already cited show, 49,016 of these citizens are already Japanese. Now, considering that 44 percent of the population is Japanese and that children born of these will be American citizens and therefore voters, it is not difficult to calculate how many years it will be before a majority of the voters will be Japanese and the territory will be governed by the Japanese majority—Japanese, moreover, between whom and the Americans there is keen racial feeling. The coming of this time will be shortened, furthermore, by the higher birthrate of the Japanese compared with Americans. In 1917, for instance, 5,000 Japanese children were born in Hawaii and 295 Americans. In 1920 the Japanese birthrate was 43.73 per thousand and

1920s Hawaii

the birthrate of all Caucasians, Americans included, was 14.96 per thousand. This came in actual figures to 374 white children born in 1920 and 4,963 Japanese. Carry this out ten or twenty years and the result is obvious.

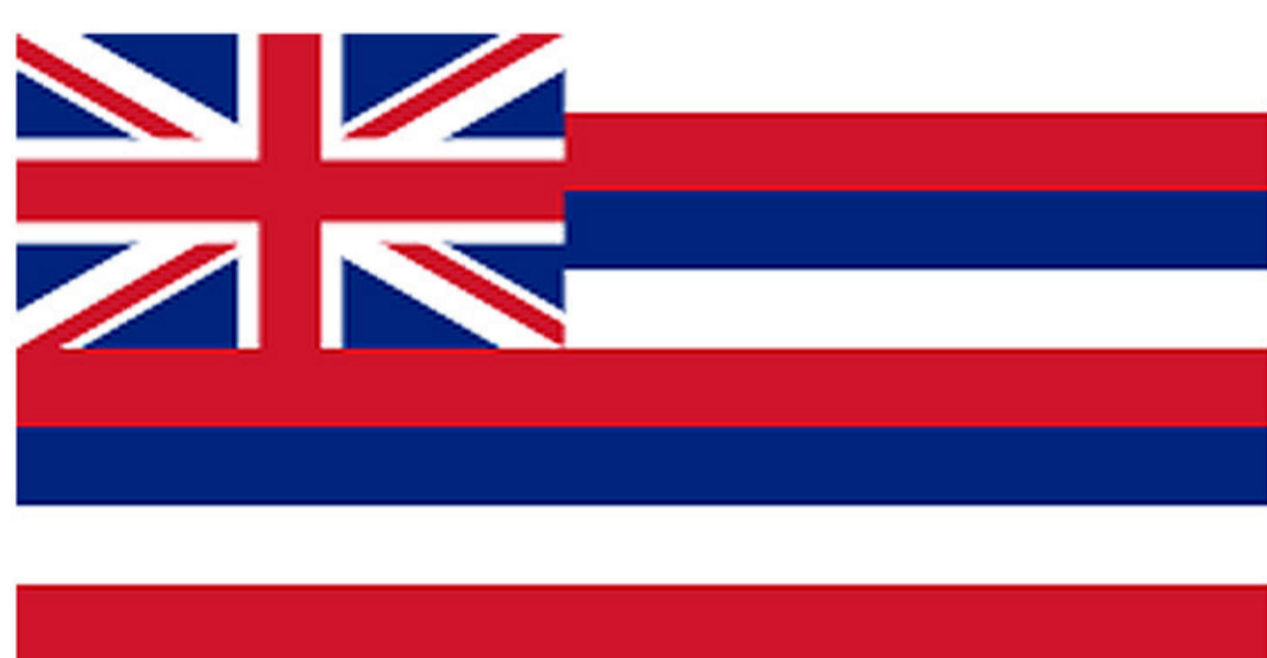
As a matter of fact, a commission of the Federal Bureau of Education which made a survey of conditions in Hawaii in 1920 listed in its report the Japanese births for the last twenty-five years, with a table showing when these will reach voting age. This table shows that in 1930 there will be 12,216 Japanese eligible to vote; in 1940 there will be 35,137. The same table shows that the estimated total electorate of all nationalities exclusive of Japanese in 1940 will be 34,907. Deducting from the Japanese figures a certain proportion for death or departure — past records indicate that this will be about 13 percent—the Japanese electorate in 1940 is estimated at 30,857, or a figure nearly equal to that of all other nationalities combined. In a few years after that at best the Japanese will have established a clear majority, and in one more generation, it is safe to say, political control of an American territory will have passed to Japanese.

To Japanese, but will it be to Japan necessarily? How much have the Japanese been Americanized and what forces exist as obstacles to Americanization and as means to maintaining their own race solidarity? First, let it be remembered that the Japanese have a dual citizenship. The Japanese government does not renounce its claim on the allegiance of its people even where born under foreign flags; unless they formally forswear Japanese citizenship they must serve their term in the Japanese army as conscripts even if American-born. This naturally puts all Hawaiian-born Japanese under the influence of Japanese officials there. Also, there is the inherent Japanese resistance to assimilation by other peoples. They are clannish. As shown by statistics, they do not intermarry. They do not even intermingle much. They have little interest in community affairs. And their family system, with its powerful and far-reaching demands, makes for group loyalty and race loyalty. In addition, there are the Japanese press and the Japanese foreign-language schools.

There are sixteen Japanese-language publications in Hawaii, of which seven are dailies. The Japanese dailies in Honolulu have a larger circulation than the two American dailies. Only an infinitesimal proportion of Japanese residents read anything but the Japan-

1920s Hawaii

residents read anything but the Japanese papers. Of much more influence are the Japanese schools. These are part of the Japanese Buddhist organizations. Hawaii has compulsory education laws, of course, and children of all nationalities attend the public schools. The Japanese schools (as well as other foreign-language schools, Chinese and Korean) are conducted both before and after regular school hours, the children being compelled to study in what amounts to a double shift.



The AMERICAN LEGION Weekly

OldMagazineArticles.com