Roger Bell, *Last among Equals: Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984. Pp. 377, bibliography, index, notes. $24.95.

The history of Hawaii's quest for American statehood has emerged in Roger Bell's *Last among Equals.* Rather than being just another mundane example of orthodox public history, Bell's study examines the theories, trends, rhetoric, and politics governing Hawaii's transition from an American territory to a state. The fundamental issue is restated at the outset: "The question of statehood for Hawaii was not simply about home rule. It was also about who should rule at home." The changes occurring during the early twentieth century precipitated considerable reflection over the eventual political destiny of the islands. The revolutionary Americans responsible for the overthrow of the

Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 swept away the last remaining vestiges of native rule and proceeded to govern Hawaii in oligarchic fashion and with considerable success. The growing population of Asians augured increased oriental influence in the political climate, which the ruling patriarchs wished to forestall. With some ideological support from some native Hawaiian personalities, resistance to statehood based on anti-Asian sentiment would permeate the statehood scenario for the next six decades.

The emergence of political parties institutionalized ethnic rivalries, giving opposing segments legitimate affiliation to pursue statehood or to hinder it. In spite of growing Asian participation in the Democratic party, the white elite nonetheless controlled the fundamental political, economic, and social institutions in the islands and would continue to do so as long as their relationship with Washington was based on the appointive process. Changes in political outlook did not come with any liberalization in philosophy, but rather as the result of identifiable situations that clearly indicated the vulnerability of territorial status to congressional actions. Adverse publicity surrounding the traumatic Massie rape trial which pitted white and non-white communities against each other aroused the ire of many congressmen who threatened commission government for Hawaii. The overextension of martial law during World War II and passage of legislation unfavorable to Hawaii sugar convinced many oligarchs that congressional wardship over the islands could only be terminated with statehood. Consequently, during the late 1940s an uneasy alliance between the dominant Republican party and the fledgling Democrats was struck in a concerted effort to obtain statehood. Nothing less than a well organized and relentless campaign to convince conservative congressmen that Hawaii was qualified to enter the Union as a coequal partner could succeed. While questions concerning the noncontiguousness of the islands and the size of its populations were raised as obstacles, the major concern was anxiety over Hawaii's Asian-American population, Southern state control over key congressional committees, especially those in the Senate, would be diluted by two additional seats for Hawaii. Persistence and well-conceived strategies among Democrats and Republicans alike carried the campaign.

The decolonization of Hawaii was thus completed in 1959 and signaled "the triumph of American values and institutions over those indigenous to the islands" in spite of marked misgivings among some native Hawaiians over the "forced transformation of their vulnerable community" away from their monarchical past.

Bell's work is significant for several reasons. First, he demonstrates

considerable sensitivity in his analyses while maintaining a forthright detachment from the high emotionalism connected with the issues. Second, Bell integrates oral history sources into his documentary evidence with considerable skill and uncommon ease without resorting to anecdotal methods. Third, his juxtaposition of local and national issues relevant to the statehood movement makes this volume an important account on perhaps the rarest legislative act that can be taken by Congress. The extension of the American frontier into the Pacific thus became a settled issue and incorporated the islands irrevocably into the Union.

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