

THE MAUI NEWS

Entered at the Post Office at Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii, as second-class matter.

*A Republican Paper Published in the Interest of the People
Issued Every Friday.*

MAUI PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
Proprietors and Publishers

SUBSCRIPTION RATES, \$2.50 PER YEAR IN ADVANCE.

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FRIDAY, : : : JULY 14, 1916

HAWAII'S WORKMENS' COMPENSATION ACT

As a result of a year and a half's testing out of Hawaii's new workmen's compensation act, it is entirely likely that when the legislature meets next February it will be called upon to make a large number of amendments. It will probably be conceded generally that the act is a good one in principle, but there are various features which experience indicates can be improved upon. In the first place the plan of having a separate board of five members in each county to administer and interpret the act independently of each other, has certainly shown its weakness. Business firms and agencies doing business on the several Islands find considerable confusion in dealing with different boards. A single board of, say, five members, under salary, similar to the public utilities board, for instance, and with a paid assistant, clerk, or inspector on each of the islands, could probably handle the work in much more uniform and satisfactory manner than under the present system.

Another feature which the legislature might consider is the plan followed in some states by which the state handles the compensation insurance itself. Were an insurance department of the territory created on strictly business lines, without subsidizing it by saddling the expense upon other departments, it would act as a check upon the regular underwriting companies, which at present, arbitrarily fix their own rates and in some measure the conditions under which they will assume risks. It is safe to say that none of the policies at present being written is entirely satisfactory to the compensation boards, and there does not seem to be much possibility of getting much improvement under the present law.

The rate and amount of compensation under various circumstances, the maximum of hospital and surgical allowance, the period after the accident that must elapse before compensation payments commence, and various other details of this kind, might doubtless be improved by legislative amendment. Most of the states of the union now have workmen's compensation laws, most of which have stood the test of time and of the courts, so that Hawaii does not need to grope blindly in search for the best.

A BACK-HANDER FOR THE BOOZE INTERESTS

If the liquor interests of Hawaii have any fear at all that Congress may enact an anti-liquor law for the Islands, they committed an inexcusable blunder in permitting the Hana petition farce to be carried through. What better ammunition could Dr. Wadman, of the anti-saloon league, who is now in Washington, want to back up his arguments for a federal prohibition law for Hawaii than the fact that more than a majority of the voters of the precinct of Hana signed a petition against a saloon in their town, and before the ink was scarcely dry on that instrument, had signed another urging the licensing of that same identical place? What better support could be wished for the argument that the people of Hawaii are not competent to deal with the liquor problem than that more than half of the qualified electors of a town see nothing amiss in appending their names to two diametrically opposed petitions? And could Dr. Wadman clinch his argument better than by pointing out that the standing of the signers in the community will not suffer in the least on account of what they have done? A good many conscientious men in Hawaii, who believe that any community is better without the liquor traffic, have opposed the past efforts of the anti-saloon league in Hawaii, because they believed it wrong to force any measure upon a community against its will. In short they believed that Hawaii should stamp out the booze evil itself. But the anti-saloon forces have contended that such a thing could never happen in Hawaii—and the Hana petitions now go far to prove their point. The liquor interests are generally far-sighted, but they certainly overlooked something when they slipped up on the Hana matter.

NOTORIETY WE MUST NOT ACQUIRE

Jack London is out again, through mainland papers, with the plan to make the Molokai settlement a national leprosarium. London is right in his declaration that Hawaii has learned to handle the leper problem scientifically and humanely, which the mainland has not. But that is no argument for forcing this territory to take care of this class of unfortunates for the whole country. Rather should the rest of the country pattern our methods and become enlightened. We shall undoubtedly be entirely free in time, from the leprosy curse, if we are not made the dumping ground for all the United States. If we are, the name Hawaii will soon come to have a sinister meaning among the masses of the nation, that years of education will not serve to eradicate. To doom "the loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean" to bear the stigma of plague islands, or leprosy islands, would be nothing short of a crime. It would take more than Jack London's virile pen to offset the damage, should his idea prevail.

WE ARE GLAD WE WERE WRONG

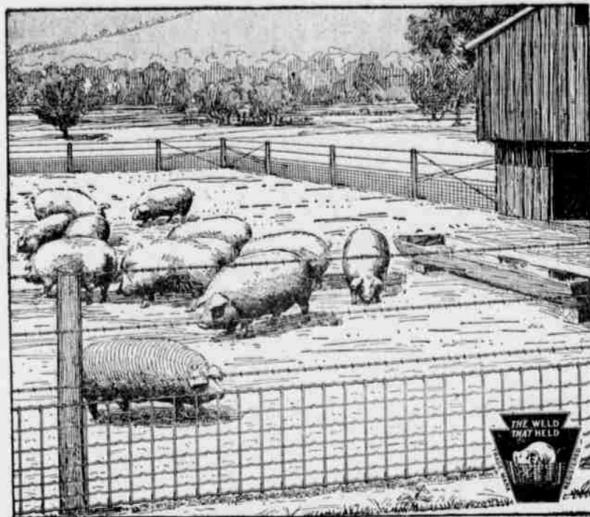
It is sometimes a pleasure to learn that you're wrong. D. C. Lindsay, Maui's member on the territorial school board, assures us that we were wrong in our reference to star chamber methods of the commission. The present board of school commissioners has never held a meeting that was not open to anyone who chose to attend, Commissioner Lindsay emphasizes. This is as it should be. But its so different from some previous boards that we can't get used to it all at once. But we're glad we were wrong. Now if the commissioners can persuade the public to attend these open meetings, or keep the reporters who have to attend, from going to sleep, the board will have something real to talk about.

Whether or not the republican party of the territory would win any strength for itself by pledging itself in its platform for a compulsory military training law is much to be doubted. It is entirely conceivable that it might act as a first class boomerang. On the other hand, a plank calling for a territorial system of public roads, ought to be popular as promising relief to the counties of a heavy burden, and at the same time be a step in the direction of probably the best thought on this important matter.

Someone has again had the nerve to mention a "free port" in connection with Honolulu, and the Ancient Order of Hide-Bound Conservatives has assembled with tom-tom and battle-ax to protect the territory from the villainous menace. Just why it is a menace they of course, haven't any very clear notion. But it is a new idea, and as such is dangerous. 'Twas ever thus.

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