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PUBLIC LAND REPORT OF BOARD OF TRADE.

An Exhaustive Report Sent to Governor Carter by Local Body—Strict Enforcement of Present Law Disastrous to Prosperity of Islands—Social and Agricultural Conditions Should be Improved.

Hon. George R. Carter, Governor of Hawaii, Honolulu.
 Sir:—The Board of Trade of Hilo begs leave to submit the following report on the question of public lands in this Territory, and respectfully begs your attention to the matter and recommendations herein set forth.

On August 20, 1904, the Attorney General, Hon. Lorrin Andrews, rendered an opinion to the Commissioner of Public Lands regarding the requirement of actual and continuous residence on public lands taken under the right of purchase lease.

On September 30, 1904, the Board of Trade of Hilo appointed a committee to inquire into public land matters, and since that time has made as thorough a study as time and the material at hand would permit into land conditions in the Territory, especially with reference to the immigration of homesteaders from the mainland and the opportunities for diversified agriculture, and into the effect of the present land law upon these conditions. We are thoroughly in sympathy with the action of the Administration in ejecting from the public lands fraudulent settlers and those who have made no attempt to comply with the purpose of the law—viz: the cultivation of the land—and we urge the Commissioner to use every effort to restore to the public domain all lands now held by unworthy persons.

A number of public sessions have been held, at some of which witnesses were examined; circular letters were sent to all interested parties within reach, and every effort has been made to ascertain the views of the general public and of holders of land in particular.

Starting with the axiom that the public lands are held by the Government in trust for the people, with the ultimate purpose of parceling them out among the people, it cannot be denied that a community cannot reach its full growth of material development and prosperity until all the available farming lands are in the hands of individuals. Public lands that are lying idle and unproductive yield no benefit to the individual, the community, or the state; while lands that are cultivated and made productive yield an income to the owner, which is distributed among the entire community in trade, to the advantage of all, and brings in revenue to the treasury of the state in the form of taxes.

Our efforts were mainly directed to a study of the question whether a rigid enforcement of all the provisions of the existing law would accomplish this purpose, and especially whether the enforcement of the "residence clause" was fair and equitable under existing conditions. From the large number of answers received to our circular letter we find that about 80 per cent have not complied strictly with the residence clause, and that all of these, if the opinion of the Attorney General holds good, will be denied patents, be evicted from their holdings, and their improvements revert to the Government. Most of the lands have been cultivated in good faith, and large sums of money have been spent in clearing, cultivating and improving them. On inquiring into the cause of the failure of these settlers to live on the lands we found that most of them had been unable to do so because of the large amount of money required to bring them to a state of productiveness; that they had been unable to make a living from the beginning, and that they had been obliged to seek employment elsewhere in order to support their families and obtain the

means to develop the land. Others had been assured by officers and employees of the Land Department that actual and continuous residence would not be required provided they cultivated the required acreage and made the required improvements, and relying on the good faith of the Government, and knowing that others had obtained patents without actual and continuous residence, they continued to invest their savings in the land. Still others, who attempted to make their homes on the lands, were met by the failure of their crops, low prices, and a limited market, while the cost of living exceeded the returns, and the failure of the Government to fulfill its implied promise to build roads, rendered it practically impossible for them to remain. These people have continued to cultivate and make other improvements, hoping that they would be allowed to get patents, and that conditions would sometime improve so that they could make their actual homes on their land.

A very small minority have been able to comply with the residence clause in spite of adverse conditions, but in nearly all these cases there were special circumstances that made it possible, such as proximity to sugar plantations or government road work, on which the homesteaders were able to obtain employment.

Going into the broader general principles of whether actual residence, as contemplated by the federal law is applicable to public lands in this Territory, we believe it is not, for the following reasons:

1st. On the mainland public lands are sold at an average price of from \$1.25 to \$1.50 per acre, and no interest is charged upon unpaid portions; in Hawaii the public lands are sold at from \$5.00 to \$12.00 per acre, or more, and 8 per cent per annum is charged until the whole is paid.

2nd. On the mainland the great bulk of the public lands will produce sufficient crops of vegetables and cereals to maintain a family, within six months or less after settlement, and the land is ready for immediate crops of vegetables and cereals to maintain a family, within six months or less after settlement, and the land is ready for immediate planting; in Hawaii the public lands have generally to be cleared of a heavy tropical forest at a cost ranging from \$50 to \$100 per acre, and when this is done the only crops that can be raised at a profit are sugar-cane, bananas, coffee and perhaps, a few tropical fruits. The cost of producing any of these crops is from \$25 to \$100 per acre over and above the cost of clearing, and the time required ranges from 18 months to four or five years, and then they are profitable only under favorable conditions of location, etc., and when good prices prevail. Add to the cost of clearing, the amount of time and money required to raise a crop and the high price of living, and the settler who personally and continuously resides upon the land will require a bank account that could be more advantageously invested in other ways and in another country. It is often impossible to grow the ordinary garden vegetables for the table, and cereals will not grow at all on most of the land.

3rd. On the main land public lands are easily obtained and the lands are readily accessible, while in many cases railroads tap the country; in Hawaii there are no roads to much of the land that is opened for settlement and, owing to the mountainous nature of the country

(Continued on Page Six.)

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DR. N. K. FOSTER,
 Secretary State Board of Health.
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