

The Political Debut of Walter Murray Gibson

Jacob Adler and Robert M. Kamins

Walter Murray Gibson, flamboyant prime minister of King Kalakaua and first target of the 1887 revolution in Hawaii, was slow in coming to political power. Fantastic adventure¹ had occupied him from the time he left home in New York City at the age of 14 to his arrival in Hawaii in 1861, aged 39, as envoy of the Mormon Church to the peoples of the Pacific Ocean. After excommunication from the Church in 1864—accused, *inter alia*, of selling church offices (to women as well as to men!) and commingling the proceeds with his own money to buy large tracts of land on the Island of Lanai that he had recorded in his name—he cast about for a vocation to engage his high energies and bold imagination. Raising sheep on the Lanai lands he had retained from the Mormon enterprise was scarcely enough.

While still a young man, he had been imprisoned by the Dutch in Java for more than a year, found guilty of plotting to stir up a Sumatran rajah against their rule. From that time in 1850–51 he had carried a dream of becoming the savior of the island races of Oceania, of gaining power to rescue them from the misrule of their white masters. A man who enjoyed good food and fine clothes, Gibson nevertheless held in contempt those who grubbed for the wherewithal in commerce. He considered the Dutch in Indonesia to be worshippers of Mammon and in Hawaii formed the same opinion of many Europeans and Americans who had settled in Honolulu. They in turn regarded with suspicion this nimble-tongued

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Southerner.² He was thought by some to have come to Hawaii as a secret agent of the Confederate rebels.³

Had they known what Gibson had been writing in his diaries about the "lines of power" running to the shores of the islands on which he lived, the members of the ascendant *haole* (white) families would have been even more distrustful of this patrician-looking adventurer in their midst. From his earliest years, Gibson had remembered, or dreamed, that an uncle had foretold fortune and glory for the boy in the islands of the tropical seas. All his life Gibson yearned to be that dream hero. His intrigue in Sumatra had ended in prison, but he was ready to try again, this time working to become a man in authority rather than a filibuster.

Gibson moved from Lanai to Lahaina, Maui, and then to Honolulu in 1872. He established a small newspaper, the *Nuhou* (Messenger). As editor (also reporter and proofreader) of the bilingual biweekly paper, which lasted from 1873 to 1874, he perfected his Hawaiian and his appeal to native voters, who made up the large majority of the electorate which chose the members of the Legislative Assembly. The indefatigable Isabella Bird, in 1873 beginning her astonishing course of travels across half the world, was puzzled by the English-language columns of the little newspaper. "The *Nuhou* is scurrilous and diverting, appears 'run' with a special object which I have not yet succeeded in unravelling from its pungent but not always intelligible pages."⁴

To local readers it was already clear that the special object of editor Kipikona—the Hawaiian name Gibson enjoyed using—was to establish himself as the champion of native Hawaiians and of their king, then Kamehameha V. He denounced as enemies of the kingdom those who favored ceding Pearl Harbor to the United States as an inducement to enter into the reciprocity treaty with Hawaii so eagerly sought by the sugar planters to gain access to the American market.

I am a messenger forbidding you
To give away Punloa [Pearl Harbor]
Be not deceived by the merchants,
They are only enticing you.
Making fair their faces, they are evil within
Truly desiring annexation;
Greatly desiring their own good,
They have no thought of good for you. . . .⁵

This was strong language, even in an age of libel-be-damned journalism. And it was bitterly resented by the planters and merchants, many of them descendents of the missionary families which brought

the Bible, literacy, and “decency” to the Islands. While many of them were, in varying degrees of intensity, looking forward to annexation, many others supported the monarchy—to be sure a properly limited constitutional monarchy under a king who would take the advice of responsible, tax-paying men. They would match their record of concern for the natives against this opportunistic trouble-maker any day. That editorial, and a stream of like abuse in the columns of the *Nuhou*, earned for Gibson enemies who would never forget.

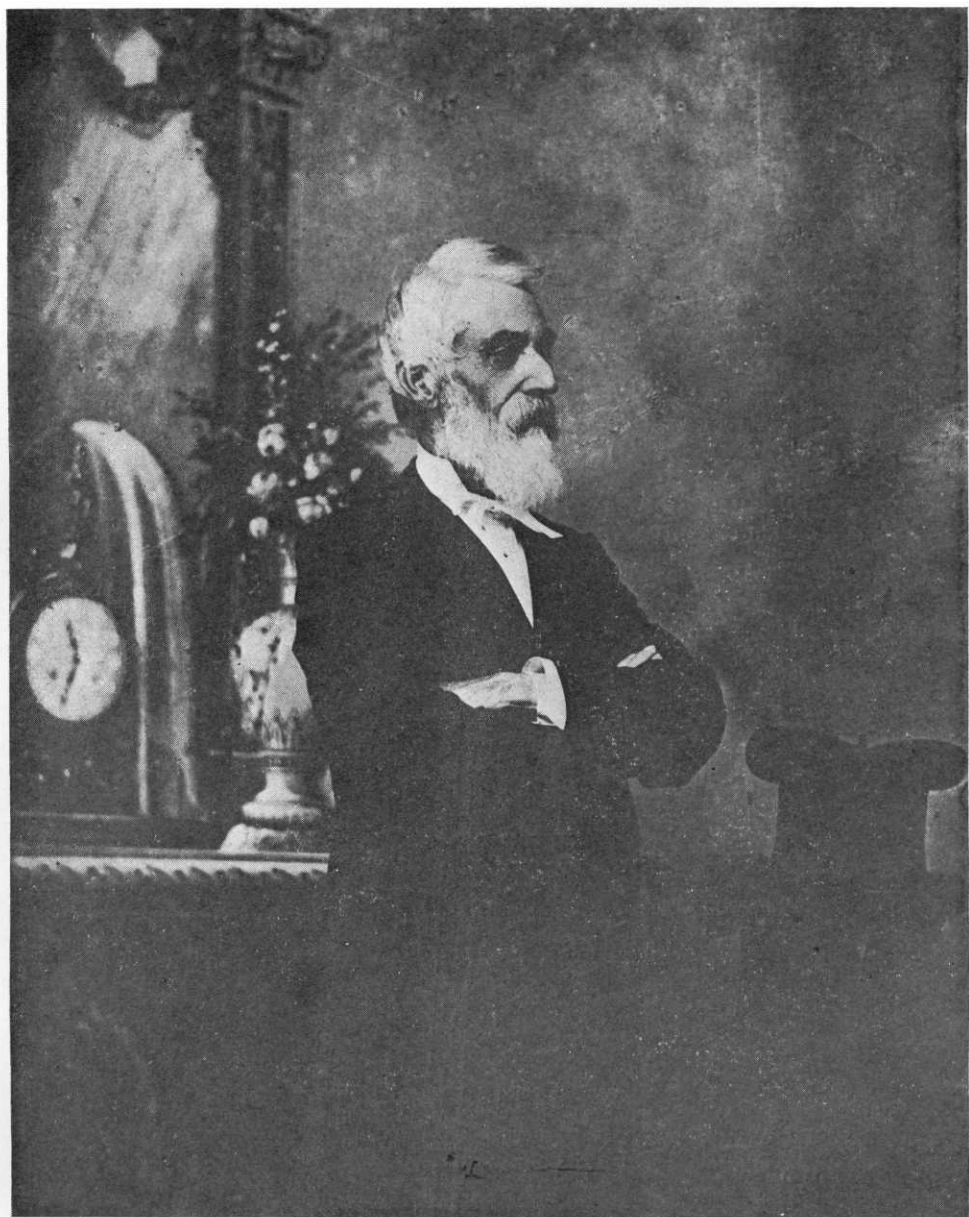
Despite his persistent efforts to be accepted by Iolani Palace as its defender, the only recognition Gibson obtained from Kamehameha V was a commission to serve as a commercial agent in Singapore. From that post he was to investigate the possibility of recruiting plantation workers from Indonesia and Southeast Asia.⁶ However, the mission was aborted in 1868 and no further request for his services came from Kamehameha V.⁷ Royal disregard continued under Lunalilo, even though Gibson had energetically supported his election by the legislature after Kamehameha V died in 1873 without naming his successor. When Lunalilo in turn succumbed to tuberculosis after only one year on the throne, Gibson took steps to ensure that he would not be ignored by the next regime.

First, he backed Kalakaua, successful candidate over the dowager Queen Emma, the widow of Kamehameha IV. Then he filed for the legislature from Lahaina, Maui, where he still owned a general store and a house. He stumped his district, speaking, as suited his audience, in English or in a Hawaiian of equal elegance. Voting took place on February 6, 1878. Kipikona won handily, one of four *haole* candidates elected to the Legislative Assembly that year.

There was gratification in taking public office, to join at last the Inside which received petitions from the Outside, where Gibson had so long dwelt.⁸ Sharing in the uncertain authority of a legislature in a Lilliputian kingdom was not the shining glory he had envisioned as his destiny since childhood, but it was an entry into the central core of this insular community. Some levers of government were within grasp.

As he awaited the convening in April of the 1878 legislative session, Gibson considered his prospects for attaining leadership and public

FIG. 1. Walter Murray Gibson, Prime Minister of Hawaii 1882-1887 under King David Kalakaua.



recognition. He was the only *haole* in the 27-member Assembly (which at that time frequently met in joint session with the appointive House of Nobles) who could speak fluent Hawaiian to the native representatives. This was no mean advantage, even though the formal debate was in English. He had long established his concern for the Hawaiian race and for the preservation of their monarchy. Even that year, Gibson had delivered a long address, in Hawaiian, at a celebration in Lahaina of the centennial anniversary of Captain Cook's landing in Hawaii. In his oration Kipikona had lauded Kamehameha I, founder of the monarchy, as one who stood "among the great warriors and organizers of the earth," a wise leader who had brought peace and potential greatness to his people.⁹

Writing so much for the *Nuhou* had sharpened his arguments for what Gibson saw as the essential agenda for the Kingdom: preservation of the race by improving their health and by inter-marriage with new stock from other Pacific islands; preservation of Hawaiian autonomy by inculcating pride in the monarchy and by holding off the Americanizers who sought annexation to the U.S. Opposed to him would be other *haole* assemblymen, a majority in the House of Nobles (which consisted of *haoles* and landed Hawaiian chiefs who perceived that they shared common interests in the existing distribution of power and wealth), and the four ministers who comprised the cabinet. If the King were to accept Gibson's agenda, and was resolute in acting on it, Kipikona would rise to the top. To Kalakaua, therefore, he had to address himself, although his forum would be in the legislature.

Kalakaua's speech in opening the session of 1878 hit at one of the problems that Gibson had long been writing about—the urgency of safeguarding Hawaiians against introduced diseases which were wiping out the native population. The Assembly appointed Gibson to a special committee to draft a reply to the throne, and also made him a member of the standing Committee on Sanitation. Most satisfactorily, as the Assembly organized, he won the strategic post of Chairman of the Finance Committee. The first levers were in hand.

With characteristic enterprise, Gibson took his Sanitation Committee to visit the place which most fearsomely showed the physical destruction of the Hawaiian race. To the astonishment of the lepers concentrated in exile in the settlement of Kalawao, island of Molokai—almost all natives—they were interviewed by frock-coated members of the committee. Upon his return to Honolulu, Gibson presented to the Assembly a detailed report that described conditions at Kalawao,

noted the improvements made by Father Damien since he arrived there in 1873, and specified what else must be done to make the settlement more enduring for afflicted human beings. Chairman Gibson offered a resolution calling for an ad hoc committee to arrange for a book to be written on health and hygiene for the guidance of Hawaiians, appropriating \$1,500 for the project. Further, he introduced legislation increasing the appropriation for the leper settlement by \$75,000, including funds for the new posts of physician and superintendent, thereby relieving Father Damien of much of the burden he had carried almost single-handed. The measures went to a receptive Finance Committee, chaired by Walter Murray Gibson, were reported out favorably, and were promptly voted by the legislature.

The Finance chairmanship was proving to be a most useful lever! The head of the money-dispensing committee could command the full attention of any minister summoned before it to defend his budget, and Gibson summoned them all—Foreign Affairs, Interior, Finance, and the Attorney-General—for close examination. The Minister of Finance allowed that there were some few discrepancies in his departmental accounts, but objected that they were too small to warrant such a fuss. To which Chairman Gibson replied that it reminded him of the story of the unmarried mother who applied for a situation with a respectable family. When the lady of the house asked her if it was true that she had produced a baby, the girl said yes, but it is a small one.

Now the size is not a question, neither in the case of the baby or the deficiency; if it was, we might doubt about the Minister's baby being such a little one; for who knows, as all is not yet revealed, but that it is a big boy of corruption.¹⁰

Adoption by the legislature of Gibson's report admonishing the Government for loose handling of public funds encouraged him to strike again, and harder, at the cabinet. In June, towards the close of the biennial session, he introduced a motion of no confidence in the ministry, resolving that consideration of the appropriation bill be put off until a cabinet that merited the confidence of the legislature was appointed by the King.

For three days the joint session of the Assembly and the House of Nobles debated the motion with rising passion. Gibson castigated Attorney General Alfred Hartwell for depositing, without authorization, public funds with his banker, Charles Bishop. (Since Bishop and Company operated the only commercial bank in the Kingdom, it is

not clear what alternative Hartwell had.) Minister of Foreign Affairs H. A. Peirce was excused by Gibson for his inaction, since he was perhaps suffering the infirmities of old age. Minister of the Interior J. Mott Smith, in his turn, was heavily sarcastic about the varied career of the Shepherd Saint of Lanai, as the opposition press liked to call Gibson. In return, the minister got the rougher edge of the chairman's tongue.

It is true, Mr. President, that I am a shepherd . . . and on the Lanai hills have watched my flocks for lo these many years—till weary with the longings of an ardent heart, I came forth from the obscurity of years, and left my sheep in the wilderness, to look after my other flock here. But his excellence assured you, that he was not a sheep, nor one of my flock.

No, sir, he is not; he is of another stock. I do not deal in animals of his kind. He belongs to that other stock, which shall be separated from the sheep; if not today, yet at some future day of political judgment in the Kingdom of Hawaii.¹¹

A central charge made by supporters of the no-confidence resolution was of fiscal mismanagement, and yet Gibson had only polite words, even faint praise, for the Minister of Finance. That officer was John M. Kapena, the sole Hawaiian in the cabinet. For the others, Gibson had only scorn. A *haole* legislator, O. E. Smith, was prompted to make rebuttal in the local vernacular, calling Gibson's rotund oratory "lapuwaele" ("foolishness") and "makani wale no" ("all gas"). He was censored by a motion, offered by Gibson, for using language "derogatory to the dignity of the Assembly and contrary to Rule 29."¹²

Resuming his attack, Gibson reminded the body that the ministers (except Kapena) had all advocated ceding Pearl Harbor to the United States in exchange for the reciprocity treaty needed by the sugar planters. Their ultimate goal, he again warned, was annexation of the Kingdom by America.

. . . they talk of decline, because their hope is that way. But my hope, and the hope o the influence that I partly represent, is that the Hawaiian nation will live; and our purpose is to care more for the life of the people than for material progress alone. . . . And now we face each other: they who have not hope in their hearts for the future of this nation, and we who will hope and strive even against despair. And you, Hawaiians, must choose in whom you will place your confidence. Will any of you sell the hope of his race for some paltry gain or hope of office, then let him forever have the malediction of his countrymen.¹³

Thus presented, the vote on a motion to table the no-confidence motion became a division on racial interests—foreigners "aye," Hawaiians (and their champions) "nay". The motion to table passed 26 to 19. Except for Gibson and one other *haole* (Bickerton of East

Maui), all the "nay" votes were cast by Hawaiian members. Political war had been declared and the first skirmish won by the Americans.

Their triumph, however, was short-lived. Even as the cabinet officers were congratulating themselves, another interloper, more powerful by far at that time than Gibson, had just come upon the scene. He was Claus Spreckels, the "Sugar King of America," attracted to Hawaii by the new reciprocity treaty under which Hawaiian cane would compete on even terms with continental beet and sugar cane. Earlier in that year of 1878, Spreckels had bought an interest in 16,000 acres in central Maui, leased another 24,000 acres of government lands there, and set about to develop the virgin but arid domain into a highly productive sugar cane plantation. Here was the man to provide the capital necessary to tap the copious supply of ground water necessary for irrigation, essential to successful agriculture, as Gibson had noted in his diary after an initial exploration of Lanai, 18 years earlier. With the resources of his California Sugar Refinery corporation behind him, Spreckels had the money to bore into the central massif, but first he needed rights to the groundwater. Without those rights he had no water, and without irrigation his land was useless for growing sugar cane. On June 24, 1878, Spreckels petitioned the king and his ministers for the water rights he wanted, offering to pay an annual rent of \$500 for a term of 30 years. Kalakaua was ready to accommodate his new and personally generous friend, but the cabinet wanted to hold the petition for later consideration.¹³ That same day, Gibson's motion of no confidence in the ministry was defeated.

The King of Sugar already had an understanding with the King of Hawaii, and on the night of July 1 they met with a few others at the Hawaiian Hotel, near Iolani Palace. About two o'clock in the morning, the royal ministers were routed out of their beds by the royal messenger who brought their notices of dismissal from office. A new cabinet, consisting of two Hawaiians (J.M. Kapena, shifted to Foreign Affairs, and S. K. Kaai, to replace him at Finance) and two Americans (Samuel Wilder King as Interior Minister and Edward Preston as Attorney General), within a week of taking office approved the water lease. And on that same day, July 8, 1878, Spreckels loaned Kalakaua \$40,000 on notes secured by the income from Crown Lands reserved for the support of the monarchs of Hawaii.¹⁵

Gibson, well practiced, concealed his disappointment at again being passed over for a cabinet appointment. His first legislative session had not gone badly at all. He had got in a few good licks at

the annexationists. He had helped expose the terrible needs of most Hawaiians, not only those cursed with leprosy and other killing infections, but all those suffering from bad housing, primitive hygiene, and poor diet, and he had pushed through the legislature appropriations to address their problems. And he had used to advantage his position as Finance Committee Chairman to get other allocations of public funds which showed his concern for the national pride of Hawaiians: \$500 to Henri Berger, leader of the Hawaiian Band, for composing the music for *Hawaii Pono*, the new national anthem; \$10,000 for a bronze statue of Kamehameha I; and \$50,000 to begin construction of a new Iolani Palace, more regally to house Kalakaua, his consort Queen Kapiolani, and all their successors. Kipikona had secured his place as leader of the Hawaii-for-Hawaiians faction in the Legislative Assembly and gained recognition as the most prominent member of the legislative branch.

The legislature having adjourned until 1880, Gibson had leisure for an excursion to some of the great cities of America which always fascinated him—San Francisco, New York, and Boston. As on a previous trip a decade earlier, he kept the public in Hawaii informed of his experiences by dispatches to the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, beginning in October 1878. The long railway journey across the continent gave refreshing glimpses of the autumn, the season most keenly missed by mainlanders living in Hawaii, and opportunity for some good conversation with other passengers in the parlor car. Between Omaha and New York City he frequently chatted with Thomas A. Edison (“What wonders this beardless youth is producing!”) and in New York the inventor demonstrated to his new acquaintance from Hawaii how his phonograph worked. Gibson tested the device with “some philippics in Hawaiian of an opposition speech in our Hawaiian legislature” and found the reproduction startlingly faithful. He was also impressed by the electric lights beginning to illuminate the city with “soft effulgent balls of starry radiance.” Nevertheless, when Edison spoke of more progress to come, Gibson mused (for the benefit of his readers back home):

Famous head of man, I said, what wonders it is unfolding; but what progress is there for our human heart? If mankind won't love one another any more, nor as much with the lightning speed and the lightning blaze, then better the slow coach and the smoking midnight oil, and love therewith.¹⁶

In New York he spoke also with Cyrus W. Field, promoter of the first successful transatlantic cable, about Field's proposal to link America with Asia via Hawaii. Gibson was more enthusiastic about

this form of technological progress, which would be "the crowning act of our Archipelago's prosperity."¹⁷

His human heart responded more fully, however, to a series of conversations in Boston. He went there as head of a legislative committee appointed to oversee the design and erection of the statue of Kamehameha I. T. R. Gould, a prominent sculptor, had been recommended to Gibson, and after meeting the artist he was satisfied that he had the imagination and skill which the monument to Hawaiian nationalism demanded. Gibson commissioned Gould to draw up a design and the plans for its execution.

After the pleasure of envisioning with the sculptor how the past and future glory of the kingdom could be symbolized, Gibson turned to the grim present, when hundreds of native Hawaiians were suffering the lingering death of leprosy. He met Dr. N. B. Emerson, a Hawaii-born physician who was about to return to the islands to serve in the Kalawao Settlement, assuming one of the positions created by Gibson's Finance Committee. Gibson was much impressed with the young doctor and felt vindicated in having secured an unprecedentedly large appropriation for the leper colony.

Then he headed south to visit with his in-laws and old acquaintances in South Carolina, where four decades earlier he had married, sired his three children, and been widowed. There he mulled over the idea of recruiting field hands from the plantations of the old Confederacy to grow sugar cane in Hawaii. When he returned to Honolulu toward the end of 1878, he made that suggestion to the government, but nothing came of it. He himself was no longer interested in developing anything more than his sheep ranch on Lanai, capably managed by his daughter Talula and her husband Fred Hayselden. Kipikona was settled in the capital, up to his neck in the life of politics.

Assemblyman Gibson had shown himself to be the staunchest supporter of Kalakaua, most zealous for the honor and prerogatives of the throne, most ambitious for the kingdom, but the King still had not drawn him into the inner circle of those who caroused and conferred with him. Like other holders of power in Hawaii, the King was cautious in embracing this volatile man. Gibson's place as an outsider at the Palace was clearly shown by the Moreno affair, which briefly monopolized the political stage in Honolulu.

In November 1879, the Chinese steamer *Ho-Chung* arrived in Honolulu. Among its passengers was an exceptional man, Celso Caesar Moreno, a naturalized American of Italian birth, about

Gibson's age, equally tall and well-spoken, also a master of languages and of persuasion. Although educated as an engineer, he, too, had bought a ship and sailed to Sumatra, where he courted the daughter of a sultan and also got into trouble with the Dutch colonial administration.

Gibson must have watched with astonishment and envy as his doppelgänger charmed his way into the poker parties and confidence of the King. Moreno was soon in direct competition, advocating the immigration of more Chinese field hands (on the ships of the Chinese Merchants' Steam Navigation Company, which he represented) and the installation of a Pacific cable by a group he headed, instead of by the Cyrus Field Company that Gibson favored. U.S. Commissioner Comly reported to Washington in April 1880 that Moreno was "the inspiration under which His Majesty's statesmanship is developing," that "he has gained more influence with the King than his constitutional advisors."¹⁸ Alarmed, the Hawaii cabinet checked Moreno's credentials in Washington and were able to demonstrate that the 1876 congressional act that had given Moreno and others the right to land a transpacific cable had expired and that President-elect Garfield disavowed the friendship claimed by Moreno.

Nevertheless, Kalakaua continued to smile on the rogue and, as the legislature of 1880 convened, ordered his supporters to back proposals put forth by his new favorite. If only Moreno had returned to China or to Italy, or gone anywhere else, Gibson could have dearly enjoyed the legislative session. Again, he was up front and at the center—writing the response to the King's address, chairing the Finance Committee, serving on the Health and Judiciary committees. At every opportunity he used his offices, and his informal but recognized leadership of the Hawaiian majority in the Assembly, to exalt the monarchy. The Finance Committee voted additional funds for the Kamehameha statue, now being cast by Gould in Paris, and for the construction of the new Iolani Palace. Gibson found Kalakaua quite receptive to the idea of a coronation ceremony at the palace upon its completion. For his sovereign's more immediate needs, he successfully moved that the public treasury should pay off the \$30,000 that Kalakaua still owed to Spreckels. For the King's future glory, another resolution, offered by Gibson and adopted over the objections of most non-Hawaiian members, provided for the appointment of a Royal Hawaiian Commissioner to the States and People of Polynesia. A dream of empire (or as Gibson put it, of a "Primacy in the family

of Polynesian States”) was planted in the receptive mind of the King. It would flourish with time.

Gibson’s bag of visions and proposals continued to attract and anger his fellow legislators. Who in favor of progress could say “nay” to his bills to improve the newly discovered artesian water supply of Honolulu, to develop the newly created Kapiolani Park in Waikiki, or to construct a marine railway to serve the growing number of merchant ships calling on Honolulu? But, on the other hand, what sane man could support his proposal to tax the estates of wealthy decedents? That offended Puritan notions of social justice and threatened the capital accumulations they held vital to the nation’s very prosperity. Fortunately, *that* bill was killed, while the others passed into law.¹⁹

Having affronted all members of means, in hand or prospective, Gibson took direct aim at the rising young capitalist who presided over the Assembly, Charles Reed Bishop. As chairman of the Finance Committee, Gibson had brought in a report criticizing the Finance Minister with having loaned \$250,000 of public funds to the bank of Bishop and Company without authority of law. He now expanded the charge into a broad accusation that the cabinet ministers and their political cronies among the Missionary Families and other long-established *haole* groups were a “ring” involved in conflicts of interest with their private businesses. A motion of no confidence in the Government was introduced by Assemblyman John Kalua and was supported by Gibson.

As has been observed elsewhere, there is nothing more injurious to a country than the actions of a lot of people, who by priority of arrival try to preserve all the advantages from others, except to those who may toady to this special influence. The point and object of the resolution is directed against a certain ‘ring’ who continue to keep among themselves all these influences, positions, and emoluments.²⁰

Attorney General Edward Preston replied in kind, calling Gibson a “political Ishmael” who had opposed every cabinet since the death of Kamehameha V, whose pompous verbosity and exhibitionism had prolonged the legislative session to no purpose and at a cost of at least \$5,000. As in 1878, the no-confidence motion failed by a wide margin, and Gibson was no closer to attaining membership in the inner circle of the King. Or so it seemed.

Outside the legislature, Gibson basked in a wide popular approval that was exceptional for him. Not only did he, the familiar devil (in the opinion of downtown Honolulu), benefit by comparison with the outrageous Moreno, but he had finally written something which

everyone believed in. This was a small but useful book, *Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians*, that had been commissioned by the legislature in 1878.²¹ Even the usually hostile editor of the *Hawaiian Gazette* praised the work, though from force of habit he criticized the author for including irrelevant references to life in Malaysia and for having romantic notions of how well the benighted natives of Hawaii had lived before the Americans and Europeans came.

. . . the natives will find it eminently readable, and we have no doubt that it will attract great and permanent interest. The author manifests an intimate acquaintance with the habits and peculiarities of Hawaiians, and knows how to reach their minds.²²

Gibson's work, printed in an Hawaiian and in an English edition, was indeed remarkable, especially for one untrained in medicine. It was a lively compendium of social analysis—telling how the Hawaiians, in losing their culture, had also lost the diet, work habits, costume, hygienic practices, folk medicine, and relationship to nature which had formerly sustained them in vigorous health—along with advice on how to survive in an environment radically changing beyond their control. In clear, economical prose, utterly unlike the poesy of *The Prison at Weltevreden* (his romantic account of the first 28 years of his life) or the bombast of his newspaper style, Gibson described the germ theory of disease and the defense mechanisms of the body, and gave straightforward, practical instructions on how to avoid the major and minor plagues afflicting the Hawaiian population, from constipation to syphilis. The need for personal and communal cleanliness was emphasized and particularized. The body must be washed each day, including the private parts, which had become a center for contagion when the missionaries halted the ancient Hawaiian practice of male circumcision, replacing it with “the gentler purification of the waters of baptism.” Houses must be kept clean, free of animals and vermin. Men must sleep apart from single women, and in loose, cool night shirts, not in chafing malos or loin cloths. Instructions in how to build and safeguard outdoor privies were detailed.

Most important, he wrote, was the protection of women from disease. The imposition of voluminous, germ-gathering western clothes, the sexual demands made of them because of the numerical excess of males, the substitution in many cases of indolence for the beneficial outdoor work of the old feudal society, all conspired to make them vulnerable to disease. If the watchword of Kalakaua's reign—“*Hooulu Lahui*” (“Increase the Nation”)—was to be fulfilled,

“every conception of every Hawaiian’s womb [must have] its complete development . . . [and] every infant born of a Hawaiian mother . . . due care and nourishment.” The nutritional value of taro, poi, seaweed, and other traditional foods over western substitutes was particularized, as Gibson drew upon his own experience with the healthful natural foods he was given in the prisons of Java.

The *Sanitary Instructions* were down-to-earth but not limited to material things alone. Young women, the potential mothers upon whom the future of their race depended, were to be sustained in spirit as well as in body if they were to have the strength needed for clean marriage instead of diseased licentiousness. Maidens must have their own sleeping rooms, apart from males.

Furthermore, the room that is set apart . . . should be provided with many conveniences and comforts suited to the tastes of the female sex. There should be a small dressing table, and a mirror, with brush and comb, and even articles of ointment and perfumery, so that your daughter can take pleasure in arranging her toilet; because owing to the privacy, and these tasteful appliances, she will care for and respect her own person, and will make others respect her also. . . . O, Hawaiians, you must take care of your young women if you want your nation to live.²³

Was all this too costly for *kanakas*, as some *haole* readers might think? Nonsense! By foregoing tobacco, *okolehao* and other spiritous liquors, by eating their own poi and fresh fruits instead of white bread and imported preserved foods, the natives would save enough money to buy those “tasteful appliances” as well as the soap, zinc wash pans, and other sanitary requirements he prescribed. Not much need be spent for western medicines, given the ready availability of Hawaiian medicinal herbs, many of which Gibson named with instructions as to their use.

Praise for the book may have been sweet reward for all the nights he had spent in writing it, but there was also sour vexation to swallow. As the legislative action continued in 1880, he was again upstaged by the accursed Moreno, who persuaded Kalakaua to arrange for the introduction of bills favorable to the adventurer. One would have granted a million dollar bonus to Moreno’s company when it had a cable to Hawaii in operation. Others legalized the importation of opium for Chinese residents (an act regarded as necessary to open Honolulu as a world drug entrepot) and authorized paying a subsidy to the Chinese steamship company Moreno represented, which would have carried the opium shipments.

The cabinet opposed the measures, which caused Gibson to vote for them, though he was more vigorous in attacking the ministers

than in supporting the bills. The English-language press in Honolulu clamored for the defeat of the Moreno bills and decried the "open and wholesale bribery" by which support had been bought. All the suspect measures except the cable bill were passed by the legislature but, following an even louder public outcry, Kalakaua vetoed the opium bills, although he did sign another which somewhat eased restrictions on importing the drug.

Political spectators who thought that this time even the Merry Monarch would say "enough!" and rid himself of the foreign schemer were again proved wrong. On August 14, 1880, Kalakaua, without notice, dismissed his cabinet, prorogued the legislature, and installed a new set of ministers headed by Celso Caesar Moreno, who had just been naturalized a Hawaiian. Gibson took to the sidelines and watched the storm gather. It was not for him to lead a protest against having a tall, bearded, grandiloquent, European-born, ex-sea captain, and veteran of Sumatra serve as the Prime Minister of Hawaii.

Mass meetings were hurriedly called to protest the appointment of a cabinet that U.S. Minister Comly described as being "grotesque in unfitness." One meeting at Kaumakapili Church in Honolulu adopted a motion (offered by Sanford Dole, who was to become the first President of the future Republic of Hawaii) declaring that the appointment of Moreno, "a stranger and a foreign adventurer," violated the principles of the constitution under which Kalakaua reigned. Another meeting, at the Bethel Church in Honolulu served by the Reverend S.C. Damon, was assembled on August 18. Before its motion of protest could be formulated, an announcement from the King was read to loud applause: "of his own volition" Kalakaua had dismissed Moreno and his cabinet. After remaining a few days to regain face while packing, Moreno sailed for the United States and then Europe. With him and under his tutelage went three Hawaiian boys of high-born families, to be educated in Italy as provided by an act of the legislature.²⁴

Within several days of Moreno's departure Gibson finally was rewarded for his devotion to the throne and to its occupant. Kalakaua appointed him to the five-man Privy Council that advised the king, and also to the Board of Health. Sanford Dole wrote to his brother on Kauai: "Gibson is put into everything; now that Moreno is away, Gibson's persevering and humble bootlicking is producing fruits. . . . Kalakaua seems to be entirely given over to the devil."²⁵

Gibson's appointment to the Board of Health was considered to be

a reward, not only for his unfailing support of the King, but also for his expose in legislative reports of gross inadequacies of the health department, hitherto administered solely by physicians. However, revelation of a conflict of interest removed Gibson from his place on the Board almost as soon as he sat down. With unconcealed glee, the *Hawaiian Gazette* reported that the sanctimonious Good Shepherd of Lanai had received advance payment for selling 2,000 sheep to the leper settlement administered by the Board, when everyone knew that the natives much preferred beef to mutton.²⁶ Samuel Wilder, former Minister of the Interior and now serving on the Board, while critical of the contract as being less advantageous to the health department than the one he formerly had to supply beef, volunteered that the mutton sale was perfectly legal.²⁷ Nevertheless, without protest, Gibson resigned from his first executive post.

The to-do over the mutton contract brought home to him how much he missed his old rostrum as a newspaper editor. He seized upon an opportunity to buy the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* under a deal with John Bush, the newly appointed Minister of the Interior. In return for Gibson's promise to "support the Hawaiian Government and its policy, and pursue a line of discussion in said newspaper best calculated to carry out the measures of His Majesty's Government," Bush loaned Gibson \$5,000 of public funds, one-third the sum needed to purchase the *Advertiser*.²⁸ In the same month of October 1880, Gibson also began publishing a small newspaper printed in Hawaiian, *Ka Elele Poakolu*, "The Wednesday Express," employing a native editor. Kipikona now had two readerships to address in publicizing his ideas and himself. It was time to prepare for the next election.

Early in 1881 Honolulu buzzed with talk about the King's announcement that he was about to make a world tour. Since an ostensible purpose of the travel was to promote immigration agreements with Japan, British India, and certain governments in Southeast Asia, Gibson had reason to hope that he, the foremost advocate of such immigration, might be included in the royal party. However, it was decided that Kalakaua would be accompanied by only two officials—his chamberlain, Charles Judd, and Attorney General William Armstrong, with the latter serving as commissioner of immigration *en route*. The consolation prize for Gibson was to be awarded the decoration of a Knight Companion in the Royal Order of Kalakaua. The list of awards, announced just before the January 20 sailing, also promoted Judd and Armstrong to superior ranks in

the King's honorary company. The badges of recognition were nicely graduated: Gibson was in, but just barely.

Undaunted, editor Gibson continued to inspire his readers to unflinching support of their King and supplied them with enthusiastic accounts of the royal progress to Asia, Europe, and then the United States. Politically, Gibson limited his activities to attendance, in his costume of a privy councillor, at state ceremonials and balls to which he was invited by the Regent Princess Liliuokalani, the sister of Kalakaua. He gave no speeches, thereby pleasing and surprising rival editors. "The enlightener . . . has evidently passed into eclipse."²⁹

Eclipse, perhaps, but scarcely total. His *Advertiser* featured articles on public health, including Gibson's reports on the smallpox epidemic of 1881, and carried installments of *Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians*, by then in its second edition. His editorials continued to preach the need for caution in dealing with the United States; no cession of harbors or land should be made to secure an extension of the reciprocity treaty. Rather than relying solely on the protection of America, Hawaii should seek from all major powers a joint guarantee of "the perpetual neutrality" of the Kingdom. To insure internal strength, the government must promote economic growth, as through the transpacific cable link, and, above all, "promote the high, holy and patriotic purpose of the King, the increase of the people."³⁰

During the political doldrums created by the long absence of Kalakaua, Gibson retreated for a time to his home and family at Lahaina, Maui. There he wrote a short biography of Kamehameha I ("The Conqueror")—presented in English for the *Advertiser*, in Hawaiian for the *Elele Poakolu*—and a long, strange "Original Story of Hungary and the Hawaiian Islands," entitled "Lajosk" which required 11 installments in the *Advertiser*.

To enliven the time, and coincidentally to stimulate circulation and restore the advertising which had fallen off after he bought the *Advertiser*, Gibson started up a new column in each of his papers. The *Elele* carried "Lies of the Week," in which the editor responded to invidious gossip, real or invented, circulating about him, such as the story that Spreckels had financed his newspaper acquisitions. Greater response was provoked by his column in the *Advertiser*, "Street Talk." Its gruesome format pretended to be a report by a fictitious doctor about the post-mortem operation he had just performed on a prominent Honolulu, usually one still living, and the account of the "body-snatcher" was not flattering to the subject of the dissection. Ribald comment, towards which the column some-

times ventured, was especially repugnant to such persons as Sanford Dole, who complained that "no paper in Honolulu has ever been guilty of such a contemptible outrage," and announced that he had cancelled his subscription to the *Advertiser*. Editor Gibson replied that Dole had not paid for his subscription anyway, and proceeded to blacken the pot.

And for lawyer Dole's indignation—Well, he has been a candidate for one thing or another for several years past, and usually at the tail end of a canvass. Now he is getting ready to try again for a billet, and tries to play off this card of indignation. . . . Let him simmer down.³¹

When King Kalakaua and his party returned to Hawaii late in 1881, Gibson put aside his antic journalism and resumed his usual dignified mien. Solemnity was appropriate for his sudden role as defendant in the law courts. Within a week of his return with the King, Attorney-General Armstrong arrested Gibson and charged him with libel for a statement in the *Advertiser*, printed during his absence. Gibson had written that it was "treason" for Armstrong, acting as the royal Commissioner of Immigration, to have told officials of nations visited by Kalakaua that Hawaii's only immigration requirement was for plantation field hands—rather than for the independent farmers and artisans who Gibson deemed were needed to invigorate the political economy of the kingdom.

While Armstrong's complaint was still pending (ultimately it was withdrawn after the editor apologized to him) Gibson was threatened with another legal action. The new Minister of the Interior, H.A.P. Carter, sought the recovery of government funds advanced by his predecessor (John Bush) to Gibson for buying the *Advertiser*. During the past year the newspaper had partially fulfilled the contract by printing government documents to the value of \$2,000, but Carter demanded payment of the \$3,000 balance. Attorney General Armstrong, reportedly of a mind to press criminal charges for "corrupt bargaining,"³² finally accepted a cash payment to close the case, despite strong urging from the opposition newspapers to "put the rascal in jail" and not let him gain refuge from the law behind the person of the King.

Undeterred, Gibson prepared for the approaching legislative elections of 1882, seeking a third term in the Assembly. He moved back to Honolulu and had his name placed on each of the 15 electoral tickets being circulated on Oahu. No formal political parties yet existed, but one ticket was generally understood to have the support of Kalakaua: it consisted of three Hawaiian candidates and

Gibson. Another ticket included the only other *haole* running from Honolulu, J. O. Carter, elder brother of Gibson's political enemy, H.A.P. Carter. The contest of the *haoles*—Gibson, now widely regarded by the Americans as a renegade backed by the King, versus Carter, a representative of the plantation-business community—commanded public attention.

During the campaign, Gibson used his English and Hawaiian language newspapers to strike at the cabinet for its incompetence and for its failure to advance the national goals enunciated by Kalakaua (or enunciated on his behalf by Gibson). The imperatives were the political independence of the Kingdom and *Hooulu Lahui*, the increase of the nation. Gibson reminded the voters of Honolulu, not nearly as strongly Hawaiian in composition as those on Maui but still with a native majority, how long he had labored for them with love, to improve their health, to insure their survival as a race, to safeguard the dignity of their King.

His opponents saw now their great opportunity to unmask this charlatan, this master of humbug, this demagogue before the natives. A rising journalist, Thomas G. Thrum, was commissioned to pull together the evidence that would by election day lay Gibson out cold. Thrum collated all that he could gather of the man's dubious past: running guns to Central America, imprisonment on Java, fiddling with the papers in his claim against the Dutch colonial administration,³³ entering Hawaii as a disguised Mormon, land-grabbing as the High Priest Melchizedek, yoking Hawaiians to the plow,³⁴ excommunication from the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, printing dangerous thoughts on Hawaii's political primacy in the Pacific. The bomb-shell was printed and distributed under the title, heavy in intended irony, *The Shepherd Saint of Lanai*.³⁵

Thousands of copies were distributed and on election day in January 1882 the numerous political enemies of Gibson looked to see how high he had been blown by the bomb. But it never went off, for they had neglected to have the booklet translated into Hawaiian, and so it went almost unread by the electorate it was intended to inflame. Drawing on his 15 tickets, Gibson received 1,153 of the 1,451 votes legally cast—four times the number going to J.O. Carter. Throughout the kingdom, three *haoles* were elected to the Assembly, and Gibson was the only one from the capital.³⁶ The results were clear: the Hawaiian contingent had triumphed and Gibson was its leader. It was just a question of when Kalakaua would place him at the head of his government.

On May 20, following the old cabinet's resignation, the King announced the formation of a new cabinet. He named Walter Murray Gibson Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

NOTES

- ¹ Gibson elaborated on his early adventures in *The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glance at the East Indian Archipelago* (New York: J.C. Riker, 1856). Royalties from this book and admission fees to public lectures by Gibson based on its vivid passages kept him in funds during the years prior to his coming to Hawaii—and, indeed, replenished his empty pockets after he disembarked in Honolulu.
- ² In 1861, Gibson was seemingly fluent in French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and had some competency in Malayan as spoken in the Dutch East Indies, as well as in Dutch. Within months of arriving in Honolulu he was preaching in Hawaiian.
- ³ Soon after coming to Hawaii, Gibson, a guest at a gathering in the home of Thomas J. Dryer, U.S. Commissioner to Hawaii, was shown the door by his host after Gibson spoke up warmly in defense of a Confederate leader, Congressman Toombs of Georgia.
- ⁴ Isabella Bird, *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands* (1875: rpt. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1964), p. 164.
- ⁵ *Nuhou*, 4 November 1873, in Hawaiian (English translation from the *PCA*, 15 November 1873).
- ⁶ From early in his life in Hawaii, Gibson had been advocating bringing in population from areas of the Pacific and Indian oceans who were “cognate” with the Hawaiian race. By intermarriage with such people, he argued, the native people of Hawaii could, be saved from extinction. He also supported the immigration of Japanese, but only to meet immediate needs for plantation labor.
- ⁷ Charles de Varigny, who had succeeded W.C. Wyllie as Foreign Minister in 1865, aborted the mission. Wyllie was the only cabinet minister, in the period before 1878, who encouraged Gibson to present proposals for government action.
- ⁸ In seeking a lease or purchase of government lands on Lanai, Gibson had learned how frustrating the ways of government could be to one not accepted into the political community. He first appealed to the Minister of the Interior, who refused to act. On the advice of W.C. Wyllie, he then addressed a petition to the clerk of the Legislative Committee, who returned it with the notation that Gibson must petition the Assembly itself and directly. That done, the Assembly referred him to the Minister of the Interior.
- ⁹ *PCA*, 2 February 1878.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 June 1878.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29 June 1878.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 22 June, 1878; *HG*, 26 June 1878. Rule 29 forbade the use of unseemly language in debate.
- ¹³ *PCA*, 29 June 1878.
- ¹⁴ Jacob Adler, *Claus Spreckels: The Sugar King in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1966), pp. 36–37.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–39.

- ¹⁶ *PCA*, 16 November 1878.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Letter, J.M. Comly to W.M. Evarts, no. 113, 5 July 1880, USDS Dispatches Hawaii, vol. XIX.
- ¹⁹ *HG*, 2 June 1880.
- ²⁰ *PCA*, 7 August 1880.
- ²¹ Walter M. Gibson, *Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians* (Honolulu: J. H. Black, 1880), p. 212.
- ²² *HG*, 26 May 1880.
- ²³ Gibson, *Sanitary Instructions*, p. 47.
- ²⁴ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. III: 1874-1893, *The Kalakaua Dynasty* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 220.
- ²⁵ Ethel Damon, *Sanford Ballard Dole and His Hawaii* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1957), pp. 157-58.
- ²⁶ *HG*, 29 September 1880.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 October 1880.
- ²⁸ *PCA*, 6 October 1880.
- ²⁹ *Saturday Press*, 15 January 1881.
- ³⁰ *PCA*, 27 August 1881.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 20 August 1881.
- ³² *Saturday Press*, 1 November 1881.
- ³³ After escaping from the Dutch prison in Java, Gibson returned to the United States and for several years (1853-55) pressed a claim against the Hague for the value of his ship which had been seized at Sumatra and for damages for false imprisonment. He was supported by the American State Department until it learned that a key document, a plea for forgiveness written by Gibson from his cell, had been removed from its files. Suspicion fell on Gibson, and the State Department dropped the claim—after it had achieved its diplomatic goal of persuading the Dutch government to admit American consular representatives into the Indonesian colony. See Irving Katz, *August Belmont, a Political Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 47. Belmont served as American Ambassador to the Netherlands.
- ³⁴ Early in 1862, when Gibson was establishing a Mormon farm community on Lanai, Honolulu newspapers had printed the rumor that he was harnessing members of his congregation to the plow. Gibson indignantly replied that once, in play, he and a few natives had pulled the plow to scratch a furrow, but that otherwise the story was untrue. While such horseplay was not to be expected from Gibson, his account is the more plausible.
- ³⁵ *Saturday Press*, 24 and 31 December 1881; 7 and 14 January 1882. Reprinted as a pamphlet (Honolulu, 1882).
- ³⁶ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. III, 250.