

The Bayonet Constitution of 1887

With firearms in hand, in 1887 members of the Hawaiian League presented King Kalakaua with a new constitution. Kalakaua signed the constitution under threat of use of force. As a result, the new constitution earned the moniker, The Bayonet Constitution. The Bayonet Constitution is displayed below in Hawaiian and in English.

The Bayonet Constitution greatly curtailed the monarch's power, making him a mere figurehead: it placed executive power in the hands of a cabinet whose members could no longer be dismissed by the monarch but only by the legislature; it provided for election of the House of Nobles, formerly appointed by the monarch. As to voting rights, it extended the vote to non-citizen, foreign residents of European and American background (Asians were excluded), thereby ending Native Hawaiian majority rule in the legislature. And it required that voters and candidates for the legislature meet high property ownership or income requirements. This requirement excluded two-thirds of the formerly eligible Native Hawaiians from voting. For those who could still vote, they first had to swear allegiance to the Bayonet Constitution.

Native Hawaiian citizens opposed the Bayonet Constitution and petitioned King Kalakaua to revoke it.

A link to the Bayonet Constitution is provided below.

http://www.alohaquest.com/archive/constitution_1887.htm