

FEB 28 1952
Bulletin

Colonialism's Last Days In Puerto Rico

In half a century of association between the United States and Puerto Rico, both sides have been troubled by an uneasy feeling that republics, unlike kings, can't have subjects. The feeling has made Puerto Ricans especially proud and touchy, and has frequently caused us on the mainland to deal with the island in a petulant and shame-faced manner.

The relationship from now forward should be easier. Next Monday the voters of Puerto Rico are expected to approve a new constitution, giving them control over their internal government. It deposes the Senate Committee on Territorial and Insular Affairs and the House Committee on Insular Affairs once and for all as the real rulers of the island. Puerto Ricans will still be American citizens, under Federal law and Federal courts, but with no vote in national elections.

That is all they want. Despite the clamors of a handful of red-hot *independentistas*, and the cries of a few who wanted to become like Kansans and Vermonters, the soberer of the insular leaders have consistently urged an arrangement described as "sovereignty coupled with the minimum conditions for survival," the principal "condition" being continued inclusion within the walls of the tariff system of the United States.

In choosing a title for the new body politic, the constituent convention in San Juan ran into difficulties. It wanted a term to express the concept of a free community whose powers were based on the will of its people, yet which retained allegiance to a broader political grouping. The choice was "The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico," but that failed quite to settle the question, for Puerto Rico is bi-lingual.

Spanish has no single word with the connotations of "commonwealth." At length the convention arrived at *El Estado Asociado de Puerto Rico*, the Associated State of Puerto Rico, though it warned against translation because of the special mainland meaning of the word "state."

There is some reason to believe that the Puerto Ricans are ready to assume the new duties that go with their new rights. Thanks in great part to Luis Muñoz Marín, who in 1948 became the island's first elected governor, Puerto Rico in the past few years has become increasingly stable. Muñoz has been attacked both as a "socialist" and as a "dictator," but he is the man most responsible for making the vote in Puerto Rico a valued and unsalable possession, and his encouragement of investment by private capital from the States has created an atmosphere of hope in a place which had almost reached the depths of despair.

Before the new constitution goes into effect it must be ratified by the Congress in Washington. That body, in the past so often cavalier on Puerto Rican questions, should take immediate action when it gets the document.