

# FOCUS

# Commentary

## For Washington, Who?

Now when the Popular Democratic Party seems to have settled on Rafael Hernandez Colon as its only possible candidate for the governorship, the real question within the PDP is who for resident commissioner.

Certainly the Popular Party has more than its share of candidates who can be believably nominated for this important position. This is so because the PDP still has in its favor having been for years and years the only party completely controlling the local political scene. It stands to reason that if you have been the party in power for so long you have many people who can claim good credentials for such office.

There are a number of names which immediately surface in the imagination whenever one speaks of possible PDP candidates for resident commissioner. There is always Santiago Polanco Abreu. He can certainly run claiming experience in the job if only because he sat in Congress for four years although his record on the job is far from really distinguished. (Incidentally, why has nobody asked "Chaguin" what, if any, was his role in the entire Culebra affair? And if the answer is "no role at all," then an even more pertinent question is: In heaven's name, why not?) But the truth of the matter is that although "Chaguin" is technically on the Governing Board of the PDP, he has no desire to return to active politics, and as a matter of fact, is seldom, if ever, present at party meetings.

Then there are people like Rafael Pico. This gentleman, a just-about-former everything, can certainly claim experience in dealing with continentals. As a banker and as a former member of the Commission on the Study of the Presidential Vote, he can also help negate some of the anti-American image which the Aguas Buenas Pronouncement left on the PDP. But Pico, in part because of his role and position in connection with the presidential vote issue, is not too well-liked within the



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PDP and he has too many enemies within his own party.

Sen. Miguel Hernandez Agosto was also mentioned once as a possible candidate. The only reason why he was mentioned, I guess, was because he has that serious image which he has cultivated over the years—that image of dedication and hard work. His views on national issues (if indeed national issues are still considered important by the PDP) are not very well known, however. Neither are his views on U.S. Puerto Rico relations very well known to the general voting public. Yet, he was mentioned.

Somebody once even mentioned Luis Munoz Marin—just to keep the pot boiling, I guess. Because it seems quite evident at this point that Munoz has no desire to re-enter active politics . . . again. All indications are, in fact, that Munoz wants desperately to avoid any possibility of his being even considered for any nomination and is accordingly returning to the island after the PDP nominating convention.

Then there is Jose E. Arraras but they tell me he's running for mayor of San Juan. That's what they say, anyway.

The list could go on for quite a while, but why don't we just concentrate on the two gentlemen who seem to have the greatest possibilities of being seriously considered for the nomination? They are, of course, Jaime Benitez and Arturo Morales Carrion (listed in alphabetical order).

Morales Carrion is one of the few people within the PDP hierarchy who, when the party was at its height, demonstrated an awareness of the importance of national politics and the federal establishment for Puerto Rico. Accordingly, Munoz was able to ship him off to Washington and sell him to federal authorities as a young Puerto Rican who could be of service to the federal government, much in the same way as he was to ship off Teodoro Moscoso for an ambassadorial position.

In the U.S. State Department, Morales Carrion climbed to the bureaucratic position of deputy secretary of state for Latin American affairs. After a not-too-distinguished term in the position (again, like Moscoso) Morales Carrion returned to Puerto Rico. More recently he has become known as the ideological father of the Aguas Buenas Pronouncement.

Benitez, whose career as a politician linked to the University of Puerto Rico came to an abrupt end when the Council on Higher Education dismissed him as president of the UPR, had a martyr's image some time ago. A martyr's image is always a good thing to run for office on. But I think it is safe to say that his martyr's halo is now askew and many people have forgotten it.

But Benitez does have a reputation for being in the PDP's more pro-American wing. I am not attempting here to state or prove that the reputation is truly deserved. The important thing for the PDP at the moment is that he does enjoy such a reputation.

It would seem therefore that the choice for the Popular Party is a rather simple one. If the party wishes to continue to stress its separatist or autonomist bent, then the man to nominate is Morales Carrion.

If, on the other hand, the PDP has wisely decided that the electoral fishing in Puerto Rico at the moment is better from the other side of the boat, then the man is Benitez.