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## *PUERTO RICO'S ODD STATUS*

While Alaska and Hawaii are losing hope of early admission as states in the American sisterhood, Puerto Rico has adopted a constitution which gives it a rating unique in United States history: it becomes "the commonwealth of Puerto Rico." Twenty per cent of the island's population of 2,210,000 turned out for the constitutional election—which is regarded as a fair representation of the citizenry in that part of the world.

Puerto Ricans have had American citizenship since adoption of the organic act of 1917. Their governor, Luis Munoz Marin, a native of the island, is the first governor elected by the islanders themselves. He is known as a serious advocate of civil rights and is credited with giving Puerto Rico an honest administration. He is credited with a large measure of responsibility for the framing of the new constitution.

Economic reasons assigned for non-admission of Puerto Rico as a state are probably not the whole answer to the peculiar status now enjoyed. Actually the door is left open for possible future independence of the island in case that should later be the wish of the responsible inhabitants. Meanwhile the Puerto Ricans enjoy substantially all the local rights available to residents of the 48 states, though they will not participate in the election of a president. Under the commonwealth status the home-elected resident commissioner in Washington has a voice but no vote in the national house of representatives. Whether the Puerto Ricans ultimately will prefer statehood with full representation in the American government to complete independence is a question for the future.

Until fairly recently the overpopulation of the area (six hundred to the square mile; similar density would give Oregon a population of more than 500 million) has given the islanders a completely hopeless economic future. Americans, however, have begun industrialization, to which the physical conditions and the abundant labor supply lend themselves, and the situation is improving. But the birth rate still threatens future trouble, and, as in many other parts of the world, overpopulation remains an unsolved problem.