

PUERTO RICO BORROWS SOME U. N. IDEAS

The House of Representatives, debating whether to approve the new Puerto Rican constitution, stumbled upon the fact that the framers of the document borrowed liberally from the United Nations declaration of human rights. Rep. Halleck of Indiana called attention to the fact that section 20 of the proposed constitution read as follows:

"The commonwealth also recognizes the existence of the following human rights:

"The right of every person to receive free elementary and secondary education.

"The right of every person to obtain work.

"The right of every person to health and well-being of himself and of his family, and especially to food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.

"The right of every person to social protection in the event of unemployment, sickness, old age, or disability."

There was more of the same, and, in Mr. Halleck's view, the provisions amounted to guarantees of governmental intervention to assure such "rights," for in no other way could they be redeemed. He argued that this was contrary to the freedoms guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

There is no objection to free schooling thru the secondary level but the other provisions cannot be executed without going all the way into a socialist "welfare" state, with state medicine, state housing, and all the rest of the apparatus.

Those who see in various U.N. declarations and proposed covenants a method of subverting the constitutional structure of the United States and replacing the Republic with a paternalistic state are invariably told by proponents of U.N. that the U.N. declaration of human rights is without binding effect. It is, say the defenders, simply an expression of what would be desirable as a social and economic standard to be attained by nations less fortunate than the United States. Assurance is given that the Senate would not ratify any treaty advanced under U.N. auspices if it were contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

But here, again, in the proposed Puerto Rico constitution, Congress is asked to lend its approval to the philosophy that the state must provide security against every vicissitude to its wards. The taxing and spending incident to the discharge of such sweeping obligations stagger the imagination, and it is certain that they could not be met without extinguishing all liberty.

The device of seeking congressional assent to these doctrines in behalf of a United States dependency, whose people are American citizens, is cunningly indirect. If the American government, bearing a responsibility for Puerto Rico, were to indorse these measures, it would agree, as a corollary, that the same state obligations are acknowledged for the United States.

We should, therefore, be bringing in thru the back door the very socialist concepts which Americans have resisted unremittingly when the attempt was made to introduce them directly.