

Puerto Rican Charter

If the United States Senate acts promptly, the people of Puerto Rico can celebrate the formal adoption and inauguration of their new constitution on the Fourth of July. The date is a peculiarly appropriate one for an occasion marking the attainment of full self-government on the part of a colonial dependency. It is an occasion in the celebration of which all Americans can participate with pride — Americans on the mainland and Americans on the island alike. For Puerto Rico's new constitution marks a modern kind of association among free men—a relationship which will redound to the credit of the United States throughout the free world.

The Puerto Rican constitution was framed by a constitutional convention called in conformity with an authorization adopted by Congress in 1950. It has been certified to Congress by the President as being in conformity with the Constitution of the United States. It has won the approval of the House of Representatives and of the Senate's Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. All that remains to be won is indorsement by the Senate itself. But if this indorsement is to come in time for adoption of the Constitution on Independence Day—and what is more important, for putting it into effect in the island elections of next November—it must be voted by the Senate before the summer recess.

There appears to be almost unanimous approval of the constitution. Two minor reservations which the House and the Senate Insular Affairs Committee insisted upon are known to be acceptable to the Puerto Ricans. The sole serious opposition seems to come from Senator Olin D. Johnston of South Carolina, who has threatened to bring up a number of amendments which would have the effect of nullifying the constitution and withdrawing the grant of full self-government which was promised when Congress passed the act enabling the constitution to be drafted. In the context of the Senate's desire to get home, the raising of such amendments—which seems to be motivated by narrow personal interests—amounts to something like a filibuster. We hope that the Senate will not countenance such tactics and will not let the threat of them keep it from fulfilling a pledge to the people of Puerto Rico. Adoption of Puerto Rico's constitution will be a demonstration of American statesmanship and adherence to democratic doctrine.