Puerto Rico Exchange Programs

The Department of State of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico acts as the central agency for the training of overseas visitors. We operate through two main programs: 1) The Technical Cooperation Program and 2) The Educational Exchange Program.

The Technical Cooperation Program

Under the Technical Cooperation Program Puerto Rico receives participants for study and observation from the International Cooperation, the United Nations, the Organization of American States and their specialized agencies, and from various individual foreign governments. Between May 1950 and June 30, 1958, over 5,000 participants have come to Puerto Rico from 106 countries in all parts of the non-communist world.

The program was first administered in the United States by the Technical Cooperation Administration, created for the purpose within the Department of State, by President Truman through his executive order of November 8, 1950. At present the program is administered by the International Cooperation Administration.
Significant of Puerto Rico's interest in the Program is the fact that its Legislative Assembly assigned $50,000 for the island's participation in the same, even before the U. S. Congress had passed the law giving federal funds to the U. S. program. The Puerto Rican Program, originally under the Puerto Rico Planning Board received in 1951, 1952, and 1953, annual appropriations of $35,000 from the Legislative Assembly.

The Puerto Rican Office of Technical Cooperation remained under the Planning Board's jurisdiction until June 30, 1954, when it was transferred to the Commonwealth's Department of State under Law No. 39, of May 27 of that year. The change was made in accordance with a recommendation to that effect in the Governor's message on the budget, as well as a similar recommendation in the Planning Board's Six Year Fiscal Program.

Agreement with I. C. A.

During the past three years, the Program of Technical Cooperation has been operated within the terms of an agreement between the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the International Cooperation Administration. On its expiration in the middle of 1957, the agreement was revised and again signed in Washington. The new agreement is for three years, and under its terms Puerto Rico has assumed greater financial responsibility than before for the training program.
Since its inception in May, 1950, the program has constantly grown in importance. In 1950-51, 145 trainees visited Puerto Rico; the number grew to 236 in 1951-52; the following year it was 303; successively it grew to 595 in 1953-54, to 781 in 1954-55, and 878 in 1955-56. During the fiscal year 1956-57, 1,007 trainees and visitors came to Puerto Rico under the program, over 1,000 in 1957-58. During the eight years of the program's functioning, until March 31, 1958, more than 5,000 trainees and observers have come under it to Puerto Rico.

The foreign participants in the program have come from 110 of the world's countries, among them: all the Latin American Republics; the Caribbean countries; and such far regions as Algeria, India, Indochina, Indonesia, Formosa, Japan, Thailand, Ceylon, Nepal, Pakistan, Lebanon, Liberia, Jordan, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Greece, Yugoslavia, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Iceland, Holland, Germany, France, England, Denmark, Belgium, Burma, Korea, Malaya, New Zealand, New Guinea, Belgian Congo, Ghana, Uganda, Tanganyika, Portuguese Africa, Madagascar, Nigeria, and many others.

Fields of Interest

In this bilateral activity, Puerto Rico serves as an observation and training center for officials and technicians from foreign countries interested in gaining from the Commonwealth's experiences in various governmental and private activities.
Among the fields of interest in which Puerto Rico offers instruction are: Planning, Public Administration; Housing Projects; the Establishment of Communities on and Aided Self Help Basis; Fiscal Programs; the Preparation and Administration of Budgets; Public Health; Medical Technology; Vocational Training and Courses; Education in its Various Aspects; Agricultural Development; Hydroelectric Development; Cooperatives; Agricultural Extension Service; Hydroelectric Development, etc.

The Educational Exchange Program

Side by side with its technical assistance programs, the Department of State of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has been conducting for the last two years an Educational Exchange Program which has been responsible for the visit of more than 500 leaders from 52 foreign countries.

Different from the Technical Cooperation Program, the one on Educational Exchange does not offer specific training to its participants. The main purpose of the Program is to provide the foreign visitor with a general idea of the Commonwealth, its way of life and its social, cultural, economic and political development. One basic objective of the Program is to help create better understanding of U.S. policies and democratic practices in an area where these policies and practices are easily observed.
The friendly political association established between the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has produced outstanding results and much good will for the United States can be generated after the visit to Puerto Rico of foreign visitors who are in a position of leadership in their respective countries. The furtherance of such good will is a guiding principle in the operation of the Educational Exchange Program.

Under the Educational Exchange Program of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico the participants are precisely those people who are leaders in their respective countries. They do not stay in Puerto Rico for a long period of time, but rather stay here for relatively short periods in which they get a general view of our development programs and learn how this development has been made possible.

The Program operates in close cooperation with the United States Department of State, the United Nations Organization, the Association of American States and with other private organizations in the United States interested in exchange activities.

Besides receiving individual visitors, the Educational Exchange Program conducts special group projects in various fields of major interest. Eleven groups of Latin American journalists have come to acquire first hand information on Puerto Rico - United States relationships. Two groups of Argentine labor leaders have been here to
observe labor relations in the Commonwealth, as well as legislation concerning the field of labor as it exists here. Since the inception of the Program, the National Social Welfare Assembly, New York, has chosen Puerto Rico as the ideal place to bring groups of social workers from different countries for a final evaluation of their experiences after a two-months stay in the United States.

The Significance of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a land where you can see the old and the new. In the past 15 years there has been a change in our standard of living on account of a transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy.

The Commonwealth is proud in sharing, at its own initiative, in these excellent U.S. ventures in international understanding. The results have decidedly proved that Puerto Rico is eminently suited to show underdeveloped countries how new technological and industrial skills can be adapted to a low income society to bring about a rapid rise in living standards under an effective functional democracy, deeply respectful of human and individual rights. The program in Puerto Rico has generated much good will and understanding of basic U.S. policies towards countries in development throughout the world. It has demonstrated that the U.S. can deal with people of different cultural background, with great respect for its values and constant and effective support to its aspirations.