Puerto Rico Votes 'Si'

Much more than meets the eye lies behind the vote in Puerto Rico, which overwhelmingly approved a new constitution in a national election this week.

On the surface, the vote established a new commonwealth of Puerto Rico, which means that the United States will be in much the same position toward Puerto Rico that Britain is with its self-governing dominions. It is a solution which retains Puerto Rico's close ties with this country, but does not grant statehood.

It is interesting to note that Sen. Mike Monroney of Oklahoma has proposed that Alaska and Hawaii be granted the same status as that sought by Puerto Rico. This would act as a substitute for statehood for the two applicants for admission to the Union, who found their hopes dashed by the Senate last week when their bid was turned back by a single vote. It would be a poor substitute, however. Alaska and Hawaii desire full statehood, they deserve it, and the passage of time assuredly will bring it.

The vote on the island of Puerto Rico also firmly established the popularity and support which Gov. Luis Munoz Marin enjoys among his people. As Drew Pearson pointed out in two columns on this page earlier this week, there has been an effort to "smear" Munoz Marin, a campaign led primarily by members of the United States Senate who had an axe to grind. The governor has been called a dictator, but the vote, and the democratic nature of the vote, should still give that kind of complaint. At the same time, the people of Puerto Rico repudiated the violent and terroristic Nationalist party, giving that party only an insignificant number of votes. Members of Nationalist party, bent upon achieving their ends by totalitarian methods, attempted to assassinate President Truman in November, 1950, and their repudiation by the voters will do much to restore a mutual feeling of trust and friendliness in both the United States and Puerto Rico.