Seventh Anniversary of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

SPEECH OF HON. A. FERNOS-ISERN

RESIDENT COMMISSIONER FROM PUERTO RICO IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 23, 1898

Mr. Speaker, observe how the language of the preamble of that Constitution corresponds with the language of General Miles' proclamation. The people of Puerto Rico organized themselves into a commonwealth in the exercise of their own natural rights, but they did not create it in isolation and separation; they created it within the union of the Puerto Rican people with the United States of America, symbolized by a common citizenship. They proclaimed the fact that their citizenship is a determining factor in their lives. The Puerto Rican people proclaimed their aspiration, continually to enrich their democratic heritage while enjoying the individual rights and privileges and performing the duties of that citizenship. They proclaimed the coexistence in Puerto Rico of the two great cultures of the American hemisphere. They dedicated their hope for a better world, based on these principles.
events which appear as milestones on the roadway to a singular destiny.

When the New World was unveiled to the European peoples that they might create new life in a new land as a rebirth of Western civilization, the bare-knuckled warrior did not come alone; with him and under the emblem of the Cross came the man of God to spread the gospel of Christianity. The first European settlements in the New World did not take root in any part of the great land mass extending from the North Pole to Antarctica from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but rather in the islands that arch as a rainbow, from Florida to the northern tip of Venezuela. In our imagination, we might picture these islands as the New World reception committee welcoming to its vastness the voyagers of the Santa Maria, the Pinta, and the Niña, and the multitudes that followed in history's greatest migration. Puerto Rico is one of these islands, placed in the center of the arch, the second island to be settled, the second oldest root of Christian civilization in the New World. It happens that the first overseer of a Christian flock in the New World, the first bishop—as we know, bishop means “pastor, overseer”—was installed in Puerto Rico.

The centuries rolled by. The small Puerto Rican community grew. Pirates, buccaneers, infested its waters, at times even swarmed its shores. The rumble of distant wars in Europe—religious wars, dynastic wars, wars for sheer power—echoed to the island at times and fleetingly disturbed its tranquility. But Puerto Rico went on unperturbed, and continued to grow and develop. By the start of the 19th century, which was to bring great upheavals in Western civilization, Puerto Rico was a community of 100,000, ready to keep pace with the century.

Europe trembled under the heel of Napoleon. Entire countries disappeared and reappeared in rapid succession. Frontiers wavered in expansion and contraction. The Napoleonic invasion paralyzed the power center of the Spanish Kingdom. The Spanish Empire dissolved and dispersed in the midst of wars, destruction, hatred, and endless revolution. But peace maintained in the island of Puerto Rico. Its people continued to develop, making ready for the great turn in their history although their approaching moment had not yet arrived.

Meanwhile, in 1873, the first Spanish Republic was proclaimed. At the urgent and fervid petition of the Puerto Ricans, not alone with the consent of but at the urgent request of slaveowners themselves, the un-Christian institution of slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico amidst peace and rejoicing. Abolition Day is an observed holiday in Puerto Rico.

The century progressed. In the northern half of the New World, in the vast expanses of the North American continent, an infant, which was to grow into a great Nation, was born on July 4, 1776. The principles upon which it was conceived, the examples it set, could not go unnoticed in the small island of Puerto Rico. In the depths of the subconscious, the people of Puerto Rico intuitively harbored their great expectation, almost foretelling that a message would arrive from the north. The message came in 1898. General Miles delivered it, and the American troops were greeted by the people of Puerto Rico, not as conquerors, because they were not, but as liberators, which they were.

Such a transcendent change in the life of a people cannot occur without inevitable dislocation and readjustments. Possibilities had to be explored and formulas perfected with due regard to surrounding circumstances. A new life must develop according to new patterns, making for a new period of history to be written. It took half a century for all these adjustments to take place.

A young lawyer, in the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the War Department, then in charge of Puerto Rican matters, wrote in 1914 the following, as quoted by Miguel Guerra Mondragón in the Law Review of the Puerto Rico Bar Association, volume 8, No. 3, page 232.

The young lawyer was Felix Frankfurter, now Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court:

History suggests a great diversity of relationships between a central government and a dependent territory. The present day shows a great variety in actual operation. One of the great demands upon inventive statesmanship is to help evolve new kinds of relationship so as to combine the advantages of local self-government with those of a confederated union.

Luckily, our Constitution has left this field of invention open. The decisions in the Insular cases mean this if they mean anything: That there is nothing in the Constitution to hamper the responsibility of Congress in working out, step by step, forms of government for our Insular possessions, responsive to the just needs and capacities of their inhabitants, and ascertained by the best wisdom of Congress.

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., in his book “Colonial Policies of the United States”—Doubleday Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1937—wrote with reference to his experience as Governor of Puerto Rico in the early thirties:

It seemed to me that there were three ultimate goals toward which policy could be shaped: the first of these was statehood; the second, some kind of dominion status; and the third, absolute independence, such as is enjoyed by the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba.

All involved great difficulties. Statehood, I think, though I was able to find no statement to that effect, had been the unconscious aim of previous administrations, particularly those during the early days. I believe that those administrators unconsciously, in hammering at the Americanization program, were thinking of Puerto Rico as a territory that would eventually be taken into the Union as the Western States had been. Undoubtedly, this solution would have been best had conditions been different. There were, however, too many great obstacles in the way. The first of these was that in order to achieve results, an entire people had to be made over in their language and their methods of approach on life—an almost impossible task. It is one thing for a Spaniard to come to the United States to live and through his everyday contacts assimilate himself to our method of thought. It is another matter to try with a handful of officials to change an entire people in the land where they have been born.

Next in point of difficulty on the road to statehood was the poverty of the island. Not only was Puerto Rico entirely unable to assume the burdens that all States carry with reference to sustaining the Federal Government, but in addition she needed desperately contributions from the Federal Government to sustain her. What's more, with the terrific population density, the small extent of fertile land and the limited natural resources, it was practically impossible to envisage any period in the future when she would be able to take up these Federal burdens.

Next there came the question of independence. From the strictly material point of view, this would be the best solution as far as the United States is concerned. However, independence at this time would be tantamount to condemning to death some 500,000 or more Puerto Ricans for, with the ties once cut between the island and our country, the economic condition of the island would be so infinitely bad that tens of thousands would die of disease and starvation.

There remained the possibility of a dominion status and this is the goal toward which I directed my work. I felt that such a goal, if attainable, would be best both for the United States and for Puerto Rico.

Then in 1950, here in the House of Representatives of the United States, and in the Senate Chamber, a bill was passed.
Seven years have elapsed since the founding of the Commonwealth and we can now see how the profound truth, which underlies the principle of government by consent—government of the people, for the people, and by the people—has once again been proved to be eternally right; the experiment has been a successful experiment.

While in the rest of the world under-developed peoples have been struggling for their freedom and today continue desperately to strive; while, unfortunately, some have fallen prey to un-Christian and strong-arm forms of government; while peoples crushed by poverty, in their endeavor to extricate themselves from their economic depths, have been misled and have paid the price of human liberty in exchange for the bread of enslavement; the small Carribean island—separated by no great distance from unhappy lands where democracy is defiled, where unrest is permanent, where tragedy continually threatens or life and property are insecure—has made enormous strides forward and has become an example before the world of how freedom and democracy need not be sacrificed in order to have the necessities of life.

This has happened in Puerto Rico, where natural resources are meager, but where the will is abundant and the spirit strong. This has happened, because men of vision, good will, honesty and sincerity, have brought it to pass.

Today Puerto Rico is the one bright spot in the Caribbean. Free peoples in a republic, under a republican form of government; who follow the democratic way of life; who toil and sweat, but spill no blood and shed no tears, unless it be the tears of joy that at times moisten the eye on a day of thankful reflection, as the 25th of July, when they will commemorate the great achievement of 7 years ago.

There can be no turning back from this path of progress, albeit there is a great stretch yet to travel. The people of Puerto Rico are marching forward. As their strength develops, as they gain in experience, so will their responsibilities increase. They are most willing for them to increase. In fact, they are anxious to assume as many responsibilities as they can bear. The time may have come—I believe it already has—for reappraisal, for the natural readjustment called for and pointed to by the experience of 7 years. But let us remember that nothing has happened to justify considering purely doctrinaire changes, illusionary formulas unrelated to the needs of development and to the nature of the problems they have to face.

A few weeks ago the Legislature of Puerto Rico requested me, as the representative and spokesman for the people of Puerto Rico, to present to Congress certain proposals of modifications and readjustments to perfect what was done 7 years ago by the Congress and the people of Puerto Rico. In the Senate the same proposals, embodied in a bill introduced by Senator James E. Murray of Montana, are also under consideration. Those proposals reflect the considered judgment of the representatives of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and they correspond to proposals made to the people of Puerto Rico during the 1956 elections and endorsed by them by an overwhelming vote. They do not in any sense represent any radical change; they have been carefully thought, meticulously drafted. They are improvements amply justified. I am sure they will be given the most studied consideration by the Congress.

As in every free society, we have differences of opinion in Puerto Rico. As in any well-functioning democracy, we have political parties in Puerto Rico. We are not unanimous in every case and each subject. That cannot be expected. But in a republican form of government, in the democratic way of life, if it is to function properly, decisions must be made on the basis of the will of the majority, provided that the rights of minorities are properly protected and safeguarded.

It is in the name of an undisputable majority that I have introduced the bill in the House.

The people of Puerto Rico feel secure in their Commonwealth status. They cherish it. They find in it the opportunity to live in freedom and in the pursuit of happiness, in their noble and cherished association with the United States. The people of Puerto Rico know they can count always upon the good will of the Congress of the United States to help them continue in the progress and development which they started on the 25th of July 1898 within the framework of government and relationships created by common understanding and agreement, by voluntary compact.

Mr. Speaker, such is the ephemera that will be celebrated next Saturday. From the Halls of the Congress I send greetings to the people of Puerto Rico and once more express my respect and gratitude to this august body which
made possible the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

GENERAL LEAVE TO EXTEND

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members who so wish may be privileged to extend their remarks at this point in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Puerto Rico?

There was no objection.

PUERTO RICO'S CONSTITUTION DAY, 1959

Mr. RODINO. Mr. Speaker, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico celebrated its official birth on July 25, 1952. On that day our island neighbors and fellow citizens finally achieved self-government, under a constitution which they themselves had framed according to their own needs and desires.

Seven years have passed since that day, 7 years of planning and hard work, 7 years of hope and furious activity, 7 years of astounding progress. Not only have these loyal Americans succeeded, under the inspired leadership of Gov. Luis Muñoz Marin, in establishing a stable government, but they have also given to the world a rags-to-riches success story in terms of social and economic development that stands as an inspiration to other underdeveloped countries.

Statistics tell some of the fascinating story. Since 1940, Puerto Rican industrial production has tripled. The net real income of the population has more than doubled, to become the second highest in Latin America. The average annual income per person rose from $121 in 1940 to $443 in 1957. Since 1931 more than 600 new industrial enterprises have been set up in the Commonwealth as the result of a vigorously pursued development program known as "Operation Bootstrap."

Illiteracy has been reduced to less than 20 percent of the population and will probably disappear entirely in a few decades. Puerto Rico's public health picture has so improved that its crude death rate is actually lower today than it is in the continental United States.

No wonder that the governments of underdeveloped countries from all over the world are sending representatives to the island to study Puerto Rican methods and to bring precious knowledge back to their homelands.

I am proud and happy to offer my congratulations to these gallant people who have demonstrated once more that there are no challenges—social, economic, or political—that cannot be conquered by a democratic government and a vigorous people. May their progress never diminish.

Mr. O'HARA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I join with all my heart in observing the 7th anniversary of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the 61st anniversary of the landing of General Miles' expedition. It was 61 years ago this July the soldiers of the United States landed on the soil of Puerto Rico to join with the patriots of Puerto Rico in breaking the bondage of that beautiful island to Spain.

On July 17 of that year of 1898 the Spanish forces at Santiago in Cuba had been granted an amnesty and the Cuban campaign was virtually ended. I, then 16, was a corporal in the American Army participating in the siege of Santiago in Cuba, and in mid-July, when that campaign had been ended, was under order to proceed to Puerto Rico. I looked forward with boyish eagerness and enthusiasm, as a veteran of the Cuban campaign, to participation in the campaign in Puerto Rico that would advance the cause of freedom for the people of that island as the campaign at Santiago had contributed to the freedom of the peoples of Cuba.

The orders, however, were rescinded and it was not my privilege to participate in the campaign in Puerto Rico. But to this day I have felt a very warm closeness to Puerto Rico and her people. Today many men and women who were born in Puerto Rico are constituents of mine in the city of Chicago in the State of Illinois, and they are making a tremendous contribution to the district that I have the honor to represent and to the city of Chicago.

I am very happy to join with the distinguished and beloved Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, the Honorable A. Fernós-Isern, in observing this happy anniversary occasion. I know of no one in the Congress who is held in higher esteem than the distinguished and learned Resident Commissioner from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. I know of no head of State who universally is so acclaimed for his virtues, his industry, his dedication and his accomplishments as the great Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Honorable Luis Muñoz-Marín.

Today is the nearest approach in date to July 25 on which the House will be in session. That is why today we are pausing in our legislative work to observe the 7th anniversary of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. To the Governor of the Commonwealth, to its Resident Commissioner, and to all the men, women, and children of the Commonwealth I send a message of felicitations, of congratulations, and of every good wish. In that message I am certain I am joined by all my constituents in the Second Congressional District of Illinois.

Every native of Puerto Rico is a citizen of the United States. He is a citizen in the full sense and as a citizen, native and resident in Puerto Rico, he enjoys the same rights and privileges and the same benefits, subject to the same responsibilities, as citizens, native and resident in any State on the mainland. He can slap me on the shoulder and say in all truth: "I am an American too," and I can slap him on the shoulder and say, "I too am an American."

It has never been the desire of the United States of America to force upon any land or any bit of real estate anywhere a government not wanted by the people. To all peoples we have given the right of self-determination. Statehood did not go to Alaska and to Hawaii until the peoples of Alaska and Hawaii had petitioned for statehood, and statehood did not become effective after passage of statehood laws until those laws had been ratified by popular vote of the people in those Territories about to become States.

Puerto Rico is our only Commonwealth. Under its status as a Commonwealth it has certain advantages and, as far as I can see, no disadvantages. But it was the status that the people of Puerto Rico wanted, for which they petitioned, and of which they approved by popular vote. That is the all-important thing. We in the Congress are very happy to know that as a Commonwealth things have gone well with Puerto Rico, her prosperity has increased, and the horizons of opportunity have ever broadened.

I think back again to July of 1898, when the soldiers of the United States under General Miles were landing in Puerto Rico, and I hourly was expecting to join them. I think back to the months that followed, when there was starvation and suffering in Puerto Rico and the United States sent money in an amount then regarded as very large to feed the starving and to relieve misery. I think back to all the years that have intervened, the years during which the United States became the first Nation of the free world, to all the things that Puerto Rico has meant to us on the mainland, and to all the things that we on the mainland...
have meant to Puerto Rico, and I know that never will come the day when the heart of Puerto Rico is not the heart of mainland United States or the heart of mainland United States is not the heart of Puerto Rico.

Mr. BOYLE. Mr. Speaker, one of the big problems facing many of the large powers throughout the world has been the granting of independence and the right of self-government to their colonies, dominions, and territories. We join with Puerto Rico in celebrating her seventh anniversary of Commonwealth status. The Puerto Rican people, through their elected leaders asked Congress for authority to organize a commonwealth government, which was granted. Thus, one of the most satisfying and successful experiments in granting a large degree of autonomy and totality of self-government to a dependency has proved itself, and has demonstrated the system of keeping it integrated with the general economy and protection of a large power nation.

An agricultural community previously, with almost entire reliance on the sugar yields, Puerto Rico commenced in 1940 to think in terms of creating additional wealth to raise living standards. This could not be done in agricultural pursuits alone, since there is simply not enough land to support the people living on it. Hence, factories began to be built, and an agency of the government of Puerto Rico was created to foment industrial development. Since that time, nearly 500 new industries have opened in Puerto Rico and workers' wages during this period have doubled and redoubled with the result that economically, Puerto Rico's gains are a brilliant reflection of the advantages of commonwealth association with the United States as visualized through the keen eyes of Puerto Rican leadership.

"Operation Bootstrap" as Puerto Rico's growth project is called, has indeed been a great success in creating jobs for a willing and able people. The greatest problem has been the population increase which steadily absorbs some of the gains, but the degree of success which has been achieved, raises high hopes for the time when the Puerto Rican economy will be sustained by a sturdy backbone of industry.

"Operation Bootstrap" was not aimed alone at the increase in the wealth of the island. It was aimed above all at an increase in the living standards and an equal share of opportunities for all Puerto Rican people, and here too, in its social objectives, the ambitious ideas have been realised to a truly remarkable degree.

Politically, the general laws of the United States apply to Puerto Rico, but as with the States, in matters of local concern, the Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly has full responsibility. Thus, no tariff applies between Puerto Rico and the United States, and goods entering from foreign countries are subject to the same duties as though they were entering Continental United States.

There is nothing quite like this arrangement anywhere else. Although they maintain their autonomy in internal affairs, they share some American institutions such as the National Labor Relations Board, the Federal Civil Service Commission, the Social Security Administration, and the Immigration and Nationalization Service, and these can be considered as part of the process of common citizenship.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is an asset to the United States in manpower, in its young industrial potential, in its position as a fortress defending the Panama Canal, and in many other ways. But the primary asset to the United States is that the Puerto Ricans are showing what can be accomplished in the happy sphere of a people who might under another power be suffering from colonialistic degradation and humiliation. It is this principle United States extends to its own people in Puerto Rico which illustrates beyond dispute the Nation's adherence to the principles of democratic freedom.

I am sure that all my colleagues join me in saluting the Puerto Rican people on this, their 7th anniversary, and wishing them continued success under the Commonwealth and in association with the United States.

Puerto Rican Constitution Day

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF
HON. ABRAHAM J. MULTER
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, July 23, 1959

Mr. MULTER. Mr. Speaker, July 25 is a date of deep significance both for us here in the United States and for our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.

Just 64 years ago the landing of American forces on that island brought the Spanish control of Puerto Rico to an end. Exactly 54 years later, on July 25, 1902, Puerto Rico adopted the constitution by which it entered into the unique and happy status of a commonwealth in union with the United States of America. On this, the seventh anniversary of the founding of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth, it is indeed fitting that we should pause for a moment to pay tribute to our remarkable neighbors to the south with whom we have experienced such a harmonious and fruitful association.

Few people with so little prior experience at self-rule have managed to rise to the challenge of democracy as quickly. Enjoying the external protection and support of the United States and unhindered by internal interference, Puerto Rico has achieved a record of political, social, and economic progress for which all Americans can be quite justly proud.

In the area of political institutions, Puerto Rico has discovered, under the imaginative leadership of Gov. Luis Muñoz-Marín, the rich implications of democracy when it is applied to new and unusual situations. Puerto Rico's demonstrated ability at self-government is a striking proof that there is no problem too great for a government dedicated to democratic ideals backed by the enthusiastic support of its people.

Many examples may be cited of Puerto Rico's progress. One important indication of achievement is the 50-per-cent reduction in illiteracy resulting from a school enrollment comparable to that of the United States. Another example is the fight against poverty which has produced an amazing fourfold increase in per capita income since 1940. Due to improvements in health conditions, medical facilities, and a general rise in the standard of living, the life expectancy of the peoples of Puerto Rico has risen sharply. Operation Bootstrap has taken Puerto Rico a long way along the road of self-improvement. New industries are booming, and advances are being made in employment, housing, and agricultural production.

The key to this success can only be found in the Puerto Ricans themselves. Proud of their freedom, imbued with a deep sense of the dignity of the individual, full of the joy of life which finds expression in music and dancing, our Puerto Rican neighbors have made for themselves a way of life which charms and fascinates the visitor from the mainland. Travelers invariably return
home full of enthusiasm for the hard-working, energetic, irrepressible people of that beautiful island.

Therefore, on this, the seventh anniversary of the founding of the Commonwealth, we send our greetings and our good wishes to our compatriots in the Caribbean. May the recent successes of Puerto Rico be merely the prelude to a greater, more prosperous future.

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Our Commonwealth of Puerto Rico—Seventh Anniversary—Constitution Day

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF

HON. ROLAND V. LIBONATI
OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 23, 1959

Mr. LIBONATI. Mr. Speaker, we congratulate Mr. Fernós-Isern, colleague and Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico, upon the great progress effected by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in establishing its governmental functions in accordance with public law passed in 1950 by the 81st Congress. Saturday, July 25, is the seventh anniversary of this given right to enter that compact with the United States—an enjoyment of certain self-governing authority with those limits necessary for the functioning of a continuing responsibility of our Government.

The Puerto Ricans were overjoyed to be counted as Americans and have reflected their satisfaction by assuming every responsibility of citizenship.

Her economy has prospered and her people have raised their living standards in conformity with American tradition.

The people have entered occupational pursuits through the expansion of manufacturing and mercantile interests—so that agriculture is no longer the sole activity for employment.

The Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly functions similarly to those of our States operating in the same jurisdictional areas.

We may predict that the next State to be admitted might well be the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

I am proud to number among my close friends in Chicago a great number of our citizens of Puerto Rican ancestry. They are outstanding in their activity in all community matters. Their contribution to the economy through industries and other pursuits are stimulating to the common effort of every American to better his or her station in life.

Puerto Ricans would have had to make many more difficult sacrifices to realize their present status if it were not for the zealous activity and persistent efforts of our own Commissioner, Mr. Fernós-Isern. He fought so valiantly for the passage of the public act establishing the Commonwealth.

We are happy to celebrate with our loyal fellow citizens of Puerto Rico this their seventh anniversary of their embracement as a Commonwealth and her acceptance as a governmental unit in the circle of the United States of America. May God preserve us to protect and guard over our cradle of American freedom—Puerto Rico.

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Puerto Rican Constitution Day—The Seventh Year

SPEECH

OF

HON. ALFRED E. SANTANGELO
OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 23, 1959

Mr. SANTANGELO. Mr. Speaker, within a short 4 to 5 hours flying time from Miami, any one of us can be transplanted to one of the most beautiful islands of Antilles. The island I speak of is Puerto Rico.

Today I am happy to express the privilege I feel in commemorating Puerto Rican Constitution Day. On the third of July 1950, President Harry S. Truman signed into law a bill which authorized the people of Puerto Rico to draft their own constitution. A constitutional convention met during the following two years; a document was drafted that was met with enthusiasm from all quarters; and after minor changes, on July 25, 1952, the Governor of Puerto Rico proclaimed this constitution in force.

By this measure, Puerto Rico and the United States are bound together by a unique Commonwealth basis. Unique is a well-advised word. No two nations in the world have a relationship such as exists between our two governments. The Puerto Rican people—when speaking of themselves in correlation to the United States—refer to the island as an Associated Free State. This is a very apt description.

Under the present relationship, Puerto Rico has prospered, its industries have boomed, its standard of living has improved, and its vision has looked upward. In recent years I have had the privilege of visiting this beautiful island in traveling from San Juan into the mountains and around the shores to the southern part of this thriving community. The residents of the mountains and the countryside no longer live in isolation, but form an integral part of a community. A visual inspection of the children with their schoolbooks and the parents with their expectations of more prosperous days and a better standard of living reflects the achievements and accomplishments of a sturdy people under this unique form of government.

Puerto Rico is a showcase in which the relations of the United States and Puerto Rico are open to inspection for the world to see, especially in Latin America. This showcase reveals harmony, understanding, and cooperation. Puerto Ricans on the island feel a kinship to Puerto Ricans on the mainland, and together they take pride in being recognized as citizens of the United States and Americans all.

Within a very short period of time, Puerto Rico's growth and progress has been amazing. At a minimum, Puerto Rico has a per capita income of 353.6. This figure, next to Mexico, is the highest in all of Middle America. Moreover, the spirit of the Puerto Rican people, under the excellent and able leadership of Governor Muñoz-Marín, has produced new and vital art and literature, along with a net national income of well over a billion dollars.

Examples of all types of progress abound: Life expectancy has almost doubled since the thirties; illiteracy rates are halfl of what they were before World War II, well-planned housing projects are reducing slum areas by ever-increasing margins. "Operation Bootstrap," begun in 1948, has proved to be exactly that: a bootstrap of strength, durability and rising standards of living for all.

All this means that Puerto Rico is a living symbol of intelligent democracy at work. The people feel this in their hearts and see it in the tangible rewards of their island. It can be truly said that a rich port leads a visitor to a rich island.

In behalf of countless Americans of every race, creed and color, I wish to extend congratulations to the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and to our fellow citizens on that Caribbean isle. May your well-earned successes on all fronts long continue in the future.