The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was established on July 25, 1952.

The people of Puerto Rico took the following steps in arriving at their present status:

1. In the general elections of 1948, the people categorically and unequivocally placed their faith in the party whose platform proposed the political status now achieved by the people of Puerto Rico. In so doing, the people rejected the programs of the two political parties which did propose and still propose on the one hand complete separation from the United States and on the other hand, integration into the federal union of the United States.

2. On March 13, 1950, the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in the United States elected to office as a candidate of the party that received the majority support of the electorate on the basis of its program, submitted to the Congress of the United States a proposed law, (House Resolution 757(h)) which would establish the status decided upon by the people of Puerto Rico.

3. After approval by the Congress of the United States during that very session, this legislation (Public Law 600 of 1950) the people of Puerto Rico accepted in a referendum held on June 1, 1951, the terms of the compact set forth by the Congress of the United States in the above mentioned law which would be the basis for the political organization of the people of Puerto Rico.

4. On August 27, 1951, delegates were elected to a Constitutional Convention for the purpose of drafting the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This election was held in accordance with the election laws of Puerto Rico.

5. The Constitution approved by the Constitutional Convention was ratified by the people of Puerto Rico on March 3, 1952.

6. On July 3, 1952, the Congress of the United States approved the Joint Resolution (Public Law 447 of 1952) which ratified the Constitution of Puerto Rico, such ratification subject to certain stipulations which were to be submitted for acceptance or rejection to the Constitutional Convention.
7. Subsequently, the Constitutional Convention approved the stipulations made by the Congress based upon which the Constitution became effective.

8. On July 25, 1952 the Governor of Puerto Rico proclaimed the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to be in effect.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is therefore a state, duly constituted by the people of Puerto Rico in their own territory through the exercise of their natural right. It is so declared by the Constitution, which establishes a republican form of government.

Puerto Rico is a free state inasmuch as it is not subject to any superior authority. It functions in accordance with the terms of a political and economic compact solemnly entered into with the United States of America, but its authority emanates from the sovereignty of the people of Puerto Rico. The executive, legislative, and judicial powers are exclusively responsible to the people of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico is a state associated with the United States by virtue of the fact that the people of Puerto Rico, upon constituting a Commonwealth, consented to leave the Government of the United States the exercise of some of the features of political authority with their corresponding responsibilities.

These rights and responsibilities are, generally speaking, the same as the people of the United States delegated to the Federal Government created under the Constitution of the United States, and which consequently are not retained by the member states of the Federal Union. However, the Federal Government does not have, as in the case of the states of the Union, the right to tax the inhabitants of Puerto Rico. Constitutionally speaking, Puerto Rico is not a part of the Federal Union, but is associated to the Union by virtue of a bilateral compact.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

The Commonwealth functions by virtue of its own Constitution and within the framework of its political and economic association with the United States in accordance with the stipulations of the compact that creates the association. The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico proclaims the political sovereignty of the people of Puerto Rico. This Constitution and the terms of the association have been sanctioned by the
people of Puerto Rico in country-wide referendum and ratified by the Congress of the United States. (Public Law 600 of the 81st Congress and Public Law 117 of the 82nd Congress).

The nature of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is profoundly democratic. Universal suffrage is guaranteed to both men and women under the Constitution and no limitation is imposed with respect to property or literacy. The ballot is secret. General elections are held every four years. Representation in the legislative body is assured to all minority parties on a quasi-proportional basis. Legislative, executive and judicial powers are completely independent of each other, responsible only to the people of Puerto Rico.

The Chief Executive may be impeached by the legislative power.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and press; protects citizens against invasion of their privacy; establishes trial by jury in all felony cases, as well as the right of habeas corpus; guarantees the right to life, to property and freedom and no one may be denied these rights without due process of law.

The Constitution provides for the method by which it may be amended; amendments must be initiated by the Legislature and finally decided upon by the people through plebiscites, without outside intervention.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES

The specific terms of the association between the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the United States are contained in the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act as established by the compact.

Those provisions of law which originally were enacted by unilateral action of the Congress of the United States and which Puerto Rico now wished to preserve became, under the compact, bilateral stipulations, governing the association between Puerto Rico and the United States. Such stipulations are the framework of the political and economic relationship in the development of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Naturally, since the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act is a part of the compact it cannot be amended except by mutual agreement between the people of Puerto Rico and the United States. As stated by my colleague Mr. Mason Seare, a representative of the United States to the United Nations before the Committee on Information from Non Self-Governing Territories;
"A most interesting feature of the new constitution is that it was entered in the nature of a compact between the American and the Puerto Rican people. A compact, as you know, is far stronger than a treaty. A treaty usually can be denounced by either party unless it has the permission of the other."

PROVISIONS COVERING THE POLITICAL UNION

The Puerto Rican Relations Act makes the following provisions for political union between the United States and Puerto Rico:

1.) The privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States will be respected in Puerto Rico in the same manner as if Puerto Rico were a member state of the Federal Union and were subject to the provisions of the first paragraph of Section two of the Article IV of the Constitution of the United States, which reads as follows: "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States."

2.) The citizens of Puerto Rico are citizens of the United States. (United States citizenship, with which Puerto Ricans are invested, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States, means:

(a) that for international purposes the citizens of Puerto Rico are citizens of the United States;

(b) that a Puerto Rican citizen can freely enter the United States and that when residing in a state of the Union he automatically becomes a citizen of the state which he resides, enjoying all the political rights and privileges thereto.

3.) Citizens of the United States, after having resided in Puerto Rico for one year, automatically become citizens of Puerto Rico.

4.) All public domain property including ports, navigable waterways, submerged lands, and adjacent island and waters, become the domain of the people of Puerto Rico and therefore of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, except for certain old fortifications originally belonging to the Spanish Crown which were reserved for 1900 for use by the federal government and other federal property acquired through purchases.

5.) The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico exercises complete authority over its internal affairs. On the other hand, the functions of the U. S. Government in Puerto Rico are subject to the same limitations as in the states of the Union. The Congress of the United States has therefore agreed
that Puerto Rico will be beyond any control or intervention in its
government and internal administration.

Furthermore, Puerto Rico is exempted from: 1) United States laws
locally inapplicable, which of course includes laws contrary to the terms
of the compact; 2) and expressly, United States tax laws.

6. Puerto Rico, through free elections, selects a Resident Com-
missioner to the United States who recognized by the departments of the
Government of the United States as the Commissioner of Puerto Rico. The
Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico enjoys the privileges of membership
without vote in the House of Representatives of the United States.

**ECONOMIC UNION**

Under the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act there are retained the
following provisions for economic union between Puerto Rico and the Unit-
ed States, most of them originally established since 1900 and upon which the
ecosy of Puerto Rico is based:

1. Foreign products entering Puerto Rico pay the same customs duty as
paid upon entry in continental United States. Excepted is coffee which enters
duty-free in continental United States but which is subject to customs duty
in Puerto Rico in order to protect Puerto Rican coffee in the local market.
Customs duties collected in Puerto Rico are paid into the Treasury of Puerto
Rico.

2. There are no customs duties between Puerto Rico and the United States.

3. Products of the United States exported to Puerto Rico are free from
internal revenue tax applying in the United States, but they are subject to
the same taxes that apply on domestic products of Puerto Rico under the laws
of Puerto Rico and which are paid into the Commonwealth Treasury. For instance,
in mainland United States cigarettes are subject to an internal revenue tax of
8 cents per package, but when exported for consumption in Puerto Rico they are
exempted from the federal tax. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico imposes and
collects its own revenue tax on cigarettes and the proceeds of such tax are
paid into the Commonwealth Treasury.

4. On the contrary, the products of Puerto Rico exported to the United
States, before leaving Puerto Rico, are subject to a countervailing tax
equal to taxes imposed in the United States upon the same domestic products
of the United States. The proceeds of these taxes are paid into the Treasury