

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
PUERTO RICO NEW PROGRESSIVE PARTY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1979

"PROGRESS," WROTE VICTOR HUGO, "IS THE ONWARD STRIDE OF GOD."

CAN ANYONE DOUBT GOD'S GOODNESS TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND? WHEN I CAME HOME FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR, PUERTO RICO WAS CALLED THE POORHOUSE OF THE CARIBBEAN. FARM LABORERS EARNED SIX CENTS AN HOUR, AND THE PER CAPITA INCOME ACROSS THE ISLAND WAS BARELY A HUNDRED DOLLARS. 70% OF THE POPULATION WAS ILLITERATE, HALF THE SCHOOL AGE POPULATION WAS WITHOUT SCHOOLS, AND THE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF THE AVERAGE ISLANDER WAS 46 YEARS.

LIFE THEN WAS A BACK BREAKING TEST OF ENDURANCE, AND PUERTO RICO'S ISOLATION FROM THE MAINLAND SEEMED ALMOST TOTAL.

TODAY, AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT COMMONWEALTH EXISTS. PUERTO RICANS EARN THE HIGHEST PER CAPITA INCOME OF ANY LATIN AMERICAN SOCIETY. MORE THAN 2,000 FACTORIES EMPLOY OVER 100,000 SKILLED WORKERS, AND TURN OUT FINE QUALITY PRODUCTS FROM AIRCRAFT TO INTRICATE WATCH MOVEMENTS.

SUPERB PORTS MAKE THIS AN ECONOMIC DIAMOND IN THE CARIBBEAN ROUGH. A LARGE AND GROWING MIDDLE CLASS HAS HAILED ADVANCES IN HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE. FIVE MILLION PERSONS PASS ANNUALLY THROUGH SAN JUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, MANY OF THEM BRINGING TOURIST DOLLARS TO ENRICH THE ECONOMY FURTHER.

THE MIGRATION TO THE MAINLAND THAT MARKED THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES HAS HALTED NOW, AND BEEN REVERSED, BECAUSE FOR THE FIRST TIME -- SINCE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS SIGHTED THIS BEAUTIFUL ISLAND FLOATING IN THE GREEN-BLUE WATERS OF THE CARIBBEAN NEARLY HALF A MILLENIUM AGO, PUERTO RICO HAS CREATED AN INDEPENDENT AND DYNAMIC ECONOMY OF ITS OWN.

THE PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

NO ONE CAN OVERLOOK THIS PEACEFUL REVOLUTION. NEITHER CAN HE IGNORE THE SPECIAL LINKS THAT TIE THIS ISLAND TO THE MAINLAND, AND VICE VERSA. THOSE ARE INDISSOLUBLE ASSOCIATIONS BUILT UP OVER EIGHT DECADES, MADE SACRED BY THE BLOOD OF THOUSANDS OF YOUR MEN WHO HAVE SERVED IN AMERICAN ARMIES SINCE WORLD WAR I.

THE TIES THAT MAKE US BREATHREN ARE PRACTICAL AS WELL AS EMOTIONAL. TWO MILLION PUERTO RICANS LIVE ON THE MAINLAND, WITHOUT SEVERING THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL BONDS THAT MAKE THIS THEIR HOMELAND. THE AMERICAN AND PUERTO RICAN ECONOMIES ARE INTERTWINED: IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THIS ISLAND ACCOUNTS FOR UP TO 150,000 JOBS ON THE MAINLAND. MILLIONS BENEFIT FROM THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM, TO CITE BUT ONE EXAMPLE, BOTH RECIPIENTS AND THE AGRICULTURAL GROWERS OF STATES LIKE MY OWN KANSAS. AMERICAN'S DEFENSES ARE SHORED MIGHTILY BY THE RENT-FREE MILITARY INSTALLATIONS WHICH THIS ISLAND PROVIDES, WHILE NEARLY SIX BILLION DOLLARS IN TRADE ENRICHES BOTH THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE UNITED STATES.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, AND FOR MANY MORE WHICH HAVE THEIR ROOTS SUNK DEEP IN HEMISPHERIC HISTORY AND FRATERNAL BROTHERHOOD, PUERTO RICO IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY. NO EXTREMISTS, NO MATTER HOW TERRIBLE THEIR CRIME, WILL EVER CONVINCe THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT PUERTO RICO COULD BE THEIR ENEMY. NO GUERILLA BAND CAN EVER MISREPRESENT ITSELF AS THE HONEST VOICE OF THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE.

THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

WE ARE MORE THAN NEIGHBORS. WE ARE FELLOW CITIZENS. WHATEVER THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND MAY ULTIMATELY DECIDE ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL STATUS, WHETHER THEY CONTINUE COMMONWEALTH STATUS OR, AS PRESIDENT FORD AND I HAVE URGED, DECIDE TO BECOME OUR 51ST STATE, WE WILL RETAIN OUR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP.

AND, BECAUSE WE HAVE SUCH A RELATIONSHIP, BECAUSE THE U.S. AND PUERTO RICO ARE INSEPERABLY LINKED IN THEIR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS, AMERICANS MUST NOT OVERLOOK THE DIFFICULTIES THAT CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THIS ISLAND AND HER PEOPLE.

PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

GREAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, BUT REAL PROBLEMS REMAIN. POVERTY CONTINUES TO ERODE THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF TOO MANY PUERTO RICANS. PER CAPITA INCOME, WHILE TWENTY TIMES WHAT IT WAS IN 1946, REMAINS ONLY HALF THAT OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI. AN ESTIMATED 60% OF THE POPULATION DEPENDS UPON FOOD STAMPS FOR PART OR MOST OF THEIR DIET.

THESE PROBLEMS WILL NOT GO AWAY, RHETORIC WILL NOT ADDRESS THEM. BUT A GOVERNMENT AND A PRESIDENT WHO COMBINE COMPASSION WITH COMPETENCE CAN. AND THAT BRINGS US TO THE MISSION OF OUR PARTY IN 1980.

I COULD STAND HERE ALL EVENING AND RECITE A LITANY OF FAILURES DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. I COULD TOTE UP THE COST OF PRESIDENTIAL INEXPERIENCE, AT HOME AND ABROAD, THE PRESTIGE TARNISHED, THE STANDARDS OF LIVING REDUCED, THE UNCERTAINTY AND DRIFT ENGENDERED. BUT CRITICISM ALONE DOES NOTHING TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS. TO BE USEFUL, PARTISANSHIP MUST BE DIRECTED TOWARD SPECIFIC ENDS. IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO SAY JIMMY CARTER'S FAILED AND WERE AVAILABLE - WE HAVE TO OFFER A POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE, A VISION TO WHICH MILLIONS OF DISAPPOINTED AMERICANS CAN ENTHUSIASTICALLY REPAIR.

AND IT'S NOT ENOUGH FOR ME OR ANY OTHER CANDIDATE TO COME TO THIS ISLAND, RECITE A FEW CAREFULLY MEMORIZED SPANISH PHRASES, PLEDGE OUR SUPPORT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, THEN EXPECT TO WIN 14 DELEGATES TO DETROIT.

THAT'S POLITICS AS USUAL. AND IN 1980, POLITICS AS USUAL
ISN'T GOING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH.

ASK YOURSELVES, WHAT RECORD OF EXPERIENCE SHOULD A REPUBLICAN
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE BRING BEFORE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE?

A FOUL-WEATHER FRIEND

FOR 19 YEARS, I'VE SERVED IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE. ON THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE, WHERE I SERVE AS RANKING REPUBLICAN,
I WORK EVERY DAY ON ISSUES LIKE INFLATION AND ENERGY AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH - THE VERY HEART OF THE CONCERNS VOICED BY
MILLIONS OF WORRIED AMERICANS TODAY.

I'VE NOT BEEN A FAIR WEATHER FRIEND TO PUERTO RICO. AS A
FORMER NATIONAL CHAIRMAN OF OUR PARTY, I RECOGNIZED A NEED,
NOT JUST TO CAMPAIGN FOR HISPANIC AND OTHER MINORITY VOTES -
BUT TO PROVIDE HISPANICS AND OTHER MINORITIES WITH A HOME
INSIDE THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

YOU DON'T DO THAT BY ISSUING SYMPATHETIC PRESS RELEASES.
YOU DO ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE, AND IN PARTY GATHERINGS
AND AT HUNDREDS OF CAMPAIGN FUNCTIONS ALL ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

WHEN CSA WANTED TO REDUCE ITS FUNDING TO LULAC EDUCATIONAL CENTERS, I STOOD UP ... AND SAID THIS WAS WRONG, THIS WAS INSANE AS LONG AS HISPANIC CHILDREN WERE BEING SHORT CHANGED IN THEIR SCHOOLING. AND WE WON THAT FIGHT.

WHEN EFFORTS WERE MADE TO SEVERELY CUT BACK ON THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM IN THE CONGRESS, GEORGE McGOVERN AND I STOOD UP TO SAY THIS WAS AN ISSUE OF TRANSCENDANT MORALITY. PEOPLE'S LIVES WERE AT STAKE ... HOW COULD WE THINK OF PULLING THE NUTRITIONAL RUG OUT FROM UNDER OUR CITIZENS? AND WE WON THAT FIGHT.

WHEN THE MEDICAID PROGRAM WAS ADMINISTERED WITH ONE SET OF CRITERIA FOR THE 50 STATES AND ANOTHER SET FOR PUERTO RICO, I STOOD UP AND INTRODUCED LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD ELIMINATE SUCH INJUSTICES, WHILE RAISING THE OVERALL MEDICAID CEILING. WE WON THAT FIGHT, TOO.

FIGHTS YET TO BE WON

THERE ARE OTHER FIGHTS WE HAVE YET TO WIN, BUT WILL GO ON - NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE POLITICALLY ATTRACTIVE, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE RIGHT.

I WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE OF HISPANIC AFFAIRS IN THE WHITE HOUSE. TO DO ANYTHING LESS IN A NATION WHOSE POPULATION IS 20 MILLION AND GROWING IS AN OUTRIGHT SCANDAL.

I WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR ECONOMIC POLICIES THAT ENCOURAGE, NOT DEPENDENCE ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BUT INDEPENDENCE FOR EVERY MAN AND WOMAN IN EVERY AMERICAN COMMUNITY. THAT MEANS PROVIDING INCENTIVES FOR INVESTMENT, FOR SAVINGS, FOR NEW BUSINESSES AND THE EXPANSION OF OLD ONES, FOR NEW JOBS THAT CAN GIVE NEW HOPE TO PEOPLE NOW TRAPPED ON THE TREADMILL OF DEPENDENCE.

I'VE INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO REDUCE THE TANGLE OF CONFLICTING AND ECONOMICALLY DEADENING REGULATION THAT NOW DISCOURAGES SO MANY OF OUR SMALL BUSINESSMEN AND WOMEN. ON THE FINANCE COMMITTEE, I'M WORKING TO PROMOTE TAX INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES EXPANDING INTO THE MINORITY COMMUNITY. I'VE INTRODUCED A NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM THAT WOULD REMOVE THE FEAR OF FINANCIAL DISASTER THAT NOW ACCOMPANIES CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS IN THIS COUNTRY - WITHOUT SADDLING THE TAXPAYER WITH A VAST NEW BUREAUCRACY, AND THE HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WITH THE RISK OF RATIONED MEDICINE.

I'VE INTRODUCED A WELFARE REFORM PROPOSAL THAT WOULD GIVE MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE TO EACH STATE - AND TO PUERTO RICO - BY FOLLOWING THE BLOCK GRANT APPROACH. LAST YEAR, STRINGS ATTACHED TO FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS COST STATE GOVERNMENTS FIVE BILLION DOLLARS. WHAT A WASTE!

THE KINSHIP OF STRUGGLE

THE FACT IS, MY FRIENDS, WHEN OTHER CANDIDATES COME TO PUERTO RICO AND PLEDGE TO DO SOMETHING IN THE FUTURE, IF THEY ARE ELECTED, YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF WHAT THEY CAN POINT TO AS A RECORD OF PRIOR ACHIEVEMENT. DO THEY HAVE THE SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS AND THE STRUGGLES OF HISPANIC PEOPLE THAT COMES WITH YOUR OWN ADVERSITY?

HAVE THEY FOUND THE COMMON BROTHERHOOD OF EACH MAN IN THE CRUCIBLE OF WAR, OR FACED THE DEMOCRACY OF SUDDEN AND VIOLENT DEATH ON A FOREIGN BATTLEFIELD?

I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO SUFFER. I'VE SEEN MEN DIE AT MY FEET IN BATTLE. I'VE SPENT 39 MONTHS IN A HOSPITAL, REGAINING WITH GOD'S HELP MY INDEPENDENCE AND MY FUTURE. I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO CONFRONT OVERWHELMING ODDS - AND TO OVERCOME THEM.

SO I SYMPATHIZE WITH THE STRUGGLE OF THIS ISLAND, AND OF HISPANICS ON THE MAINLAND, TO CARVE OUT THEIR FAIR SHARE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM. THEY WANT NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT THEY DESERVE - THE RIGHT TO BE ALL THAT THEY CAN BECOME - AND TO PASS ON A BETTER WORLD TO THE CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

A DREAM SHARED

THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND, NO LESS THAN THE PEOPLE OF KANSAS OR NEW JERSEY OR CALIFORNIA, HAVE A GOD GIVEN RIGHT TO SHARE IN THE BOUNTIES OF THE AMERICAN DREAM. INsofar AS GOVERNMENT CAN ASSIST THE REALIZATION OF THAT DREAM, THEN I WILL BE LEADING THE FIGHT.

ULTIMATELY, THE ECONOMY OF PUERTO RICO IS INSEPERABLE FROM THAT OF THE MAINLAND. WE HAVE TOO MANY ASSOCIATIONS, TOO MANY SHARED AMBITIONS, TO BREAK ASUNDER NOW. WHAT HAPPENS IN WASHINGTON WILL AFFECT YOUR LIVES, JUST AS SURELY AS WHAT HAPPENS IN SAN JUAN.

SO YOU HAVE A STAKE - A VERY REAL VESTED INTEREST - IN THE IDENTITY OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU EXAMINE, NOR THE RHETORIC OF EACH CANDIDATE, BUT PERFORMANCE OF EACH. LOOK AT WHAT THEY HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE PAST AS A GUIDE TO WHAT THEY WILL ACHIEVE IN THE FUTURE.

LISTEN TO THE SPECIFICS OF THEIR PLATFORM FOR THIS HISTORIC COMMONWEALTH. SO MANY THINGS NEED TO BE DONE, TO INSURE THE FULL AND FAIR REPRESENTATION OF HISPANICS IN OUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT.

AN AGENDA FOR 1980 - AND BEYOND

1980 IS A CENSUS YEAR. I, BOB DOLE, WILL BE KEEPING AN EXTRA CLOSE WATCH ON THAT CENSUS, TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT HISPANICS ARE ACCURATELY COUNTED.

I, BOB DOLE, WANT TO SEE THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF THE HISPANIC POPULATION RECOGNIZED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE NATION. THAT MEANS A WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS, AND STEPPED-UP ASSISTANCE TO HISPANIC-OWNED AND OPERATED BUSINESSES. THAT MEANS CREATION OF THE HISPANIC AFFAIRS OFFICE IN THE WHITE HOUSE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF A CONSISTENT FOREIGN POLICY THAT REFLECTS THE SPECIAL NEEDS AND JUST REQUIREMENTS OF LATIN AMERICA.

IT MEANS, PERHAPS MOST OF ALL, AN ACTIVE EFFORT BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF TO DO MORE FOR HISPANICS THAN ISSUE A PROCLAMATION OR TWO, OR SEND A CONGRATULATORY NOTE OR CUT A RIBBON.

IT MEANS A PRESIDENCY COMMITTED TO PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF HISPANICS ACTIVELY, TIRELESSLY, WITH A REALISTIC KNOWLEDGE OF HOW WASHINGTON CAN BE MADE TO WORK FOR PUERTO RICO AND PUERTO RICANS.

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1980 IS A WATERSHED IN THE HISTORY OF OUR TWO PEOPLES - WHICH ARE REALLY ONE PEOPLE. WE CAN ELECT A PRESIDENT WHO WILL MAKE YOUR WELFARE A MAJOR CONCERN OF THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION. A PRESIDENT WHO BELIEVES IN YOUR ECONOMIC FUTURE, BELIEVES IN YOUR NATIVE GENIUS, BELIEVES THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR A FULL AND PERMANENT FLOWERING OF THIS OLD AND TIME-SCARRED ISLAND.

THE TIME HAS COME TO REASSERT OUR FRIENDSHIP, OUR COMMON GOALS AND OUR DETERMINATION TO CONFRONT THE 80'S AS FULL AND EQUAL PARTNERS IN THE AGE OLD SEARCH FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL.