

Porto Rico of Today - And Its Future



Photo by Underwood & Underwood
E. MONT. REILLY, NEW GOVERNOR



PLAZA DE FAJARDO, PONCE, PORTO RICO



GOVERNMENT BUILDING AND PLAZA, SAN JUAN



TYPICAL STREET, CAJAY
Photo © by Underwood & Underwood

PORTO RICO is thinking and talking about independence these days—as are the Philippines. The appointment by President Harding of a new governor emphasizes the fact that the Porto Ricans were disappointed in not being allowed to elect their own governor. The new governor is E. Mont. Reilly of Kansas City, Mo., and he succeeds Arthur Yager.

The Porto Rican resident commissioner in the United States is Felix Cordova Davila. In the house the other day he asked and received unanimous consent to print in the Congressional Record an article by Dr. Albert Shaw on Porto Rico, which he said contained "very valuable information which may be useful to members of congress." In connection with his request he said in substance:

"I want to say once more that the movement of independence in the island of Porto Rico has been greatly exaggerated in the United States; that the people who favor this ideal are very good material out of which to build up loyal American citizens; that we all truly appreciate the privileges of being citizens of this nation; and that our loyalty to the national flag, without mental reservations, is the best evidence of our love to the people of Porto Rico. At all events, the issue of independence is really unfortunate, but the common sense and the patriotism of the Porto Ricans induce me to believe that this ideal will disappear from their minds in the not very distant future.

"I endorse everything printed in this article except the views of the writer regarding the governorship. I really believe, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Porto Rico have a right to elect their own governor, and I hope that the congress of the United States will recognize this right at the proper time. (Applause.)

"At present we have lost our fight. But we are good losers. We cordially congratulate the new governor on his appointment. He will surely have the co-operation of our people in the discharge of his official duties. We wish him a successful administration."

Dr. Shaw's article is too long for reproduction here in full. Following are some of the important points made:

The Porto Ricans, though living under the American flag and loyal to it beyond a question, are now having very elaborate political discussions about their future. These arguments are not closely followed in the United States and are somewhat puzzling, even to public men at Washington who are sympathetic and open-minded and who really desire to understand. The Porto Ricans themselves are aware that people in the United States read more about politics in Ireland and Canada—and at times more about affairs in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—than about what is going on in an island which we annexed more than 20 years ago, and whose people are now American citizens just as truly as are the people of Massachusetts and Virginia.

Most readers in the United States are not aware that the Unionist party, which has a very large majority in each of the chambers of the Porto Rico legislature, swept the island in the election last November on a platform which included an "independence" plank. The opposing party, which bears the name Republican, was, apparently, weakened rather than strengthened by a coalition which it formed with the Socialist party for election purposes. The strong and capable men of Porto Rico are to be found in both parties. In so far as the future of the island is concerned, the Republicans are wholly in favor of accepting the connection with the United States as permanent. The leaders of both parties, as also their newspaper organs, are warm in their expressions of friendliness to the people of the United States and to the government at Washington.

The Unionist leaders disavow all thought of securing an independence that should come with any sacrifice of good will on either part. The Porto Rican political spokesmen on both sides are men of remarkable oratorical ability; and in an election campaign where they seek to gain a large popular following they express themselves more passionately in the discussion of a question like that of independence than when conversing quietly about Porto Rico's best interests with members of the cabinet at Washington or with members of congressional committees. "Independence," we are assured by the leaders, is not secession but natural evolution.

As a matter of fact her connection with the United States is too valuable to Porto Rico to be sac-

rificed unless there are reasons of a compelling kind. But it is hard to believe that such reasons exist.

If the government at Washington should hold Porto Rico as a tropical paradise for the benefit of second-rate American office seekers, the Porto Ricans would have a genuine grievance. If the finances of the island were administered for the benefit of the government at Washington, or if the commerce of the island were under restrictions that retarded local prosperity, then certainly Porto Rico would have grievances. But, happily, Uncle Sam has made a good record in these respects. Trade between Porto Rico and the United States is as free as trade between New York and New Jersey. The production and commerce of the island have increased enormously under the American regime.

Porto Rico has a local income tax dating from the war period, but the surtaxes are at very low rates as compared with those of our national income tax. As regards public finance, the Porto Ricans are in an extremely fortunate position. The island's outstanding indebtedness is only about \$10,000,000. All of the revenues raised by Porto Rican taxation are applied to the island's own purposes and are subject to the disposal of the legislature. In addition to these local revenues the United States government pays back to Porto Rico for its own uses all the sums collected by our customhouse officers at the island's ports on goods from foreign countries. The Porto Ricans are not subject to our national income or other direct taxes, and therefore are exempt from the burdens imposed by our immense war debt. They are protected by the army and navy of the United States, but do not pay any part of the cost of maintaining our defensive establishments.

For one thing, almost the entire population must be rehoused. Families are large, and the typical home is a very small and slight structure thatched with palm leaves, so primitive and so lacking in all that makes for comfort, convenience, health, and family dignity that it must be condemned and superseded as a matter of public policy. The influence of excellent schools in the towns is already having a marked effect upon the improvement of home conditions. In San Juan, the capital, the government itself is building a large suburb of small concrete houses with suitable appointments, and selling these on a long-time plan to workmen.

It takes courage to aim high and to work toward the realization of the largest possibilities. Looking to the future, it is easier to entertain the notion of an independent Porto Rico associated politically with other Latin American entities surrounding the Caribbean sea. And this conception might be fully justified if the alternative meant a rough and tactless attempt to Anglo-Saxonize Porto Rico or to subject its people to rules, customs, and standards that seem to them both strange and unpleasant. But this is an age in which personal liberty and local distinctiveness seem to be entirely in keeping with large organizations of government, of commerce, and of culture for purposes of common welfare.

Porto Rico need not fear that she will be a neglected Cinderella in the American household. It is probable that she can play her part in the Caribbean regions with more influence and success if she abandons all thought of a future substitution of her local flag for the Stars and Stripes. Porto Rico will inevitably be managed by Porto Ricans for their own welfare. There is not the slightest danger of domination from Washington for the benefit of continental America and to the harm of Porto Rico. The training and development of the Porto Rican people is much more important just now from the standpoint of democratic progress than the achievement of outward forms of a more complete home rule. Statehood may be expected as the ultimate thing.

In theory, of course, the Porto Ricans should choose their own governor. In practice, however, it would probably be best for Porto Rico, at least for some time to come, that the governor should be named by the President of the United States. Latin-American countries often victimize them-

selves in the undue excitement and factionalism of electoral contests. It is the business of the governor, whether appointed or elected, to apply firmness, wisdom and intelligence to promoting the welfare of the Porto Rican people. It is probably better for the island that the governorship, like the judiciary, should exercise its functions above and beyond the control of local parties.

There has been a good deal of conflict between capital engaged in such industries as those of sugar and tobacco on the one side and labor—organized under socialistic leadership—on the other hand. It might not be best for the island at the present time to have such economic conflicts carried into the political arena in the election of a governor. There would seem to be quite enough opportunity for a play of popular politics in the election of members of the two branches of the legislature, of the delegates to Washington, and of local and municipal governments.

The United States has recently paid the sum of \$20,000,000 to Denmark for St. Thomas and the other small islets of the Danish group, which we now call the Virgin Islands and which lie near Porto Rico to the eastward. This purchase is a fresh evidence of the importance that is attached at Washington to the position of the United States in the West Indies, at the Panama Isthmus, and in the Caribbean region. If, then, we are permanently to exercise a foremost influence in the defense and the progress of those regions, the most obvious thing to do is to concentrate strongly upon the development of Porto Rico. A great work for health and education must be carried on in the island, and the success of such an undertaking would justify all necessary expenditures of money and of scientific effort.

The foundations are well laid, and the tasks to be achieved are specific and clearly defined. The island is agricultural and is overpopulated. It is capable of an industrial development that would increase the income of the average family and give steady employment to surplus labor. On the other hand, many Porto Ricans might with advantage be colonized in parts of the United States where agricultural labor is needed. They are already American citizens and entitled to preference as against alien Europeans.

From the standpoint of American defense, Porto Rico has the strategic advantages of location that have not at times been sufficiently well understood by the authorities at Washington. In the long run, the tests of efficiency and of economy would be best met by concentrating as far as possible upon harbor improvement and defensive preparations in Porto Rico as bearing upon the protection of the Panama canal and of all our proper interests in the Caribbean regions.

As an evidence of our regard for Porto Rico and esteem for our fellow citizens there, it would be desirable to appoint a certain number of Porto Ricans to positions in the departments at Washington and also to select several Porto Ricans of suitable education and experience for diplomatic and consular positions.

Although our Spanish-speaking neighbors to the southward have had more than four centuries of experience in trying to adapt themselves to the conditions of life in their respective regions, it is well to remember that there are centuries yet to come, and that the future will give ample opportunity to atone for the mistakes of the past. The application of scientific knowledge is the principal agency that we must now rely upon for improvement of individual and of social conditions. The Western Hemisphere must be harmonious in all that makes for the avoidance of war. It can be associated in many ways for intellectual progress and for the wide diffusion of things that make up our modern standards of civilized life. One of the ways in which the people of the United States can best promote the future well-being of our hemisphere as a whole is to contribute toward intensive progress in the beautiful island which recognizes the American flag as its own.

THE AMERICAN LEGION

(Copy for this Department Supplied by the American Legion News Service.)

GOLF OUTFIT FOR PRESIDENT

Mayor Bailey of Denver, Commander of Legion Post, One of the First Contributors.

Presidential golf paraphernalia enough to last the four-year term was received by President Harding when Miss Pauline Trumbo entered the White House bearing golf sticks and bag and golf balls from many parts of the country. The sticks and bag, chosen by "Chick" Evans, open golf champion, are the gift of the Fort Morgan (Colo.) post of the American Legion to the nation's chief executive.

Miss Trumbo visited twelve states in the course of the journey from the Colorado city to the national cap-



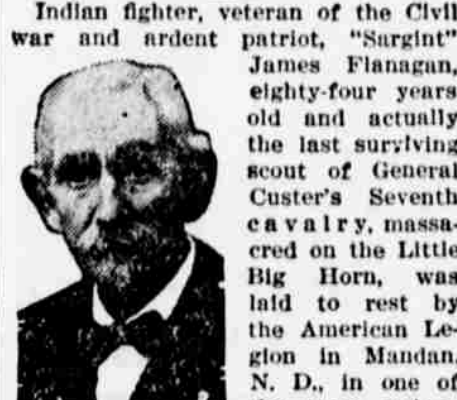
Miss Pauline Trumbo.

itol. In every city and state visited the mayor or governor contributed an engraved golf ball for President Harding.

The collection of golf balls started in Denver with gutta percha "pills" from Governor Shoup of Colorado, Mayor Bailey of Denver, the commander of the Legion post and a Denver newspaper.

LEGION MEN BURY PATRIOT

"Sargint" James Flanagan, Last of Custer Scouts, Laid to Rest in North Dakota.



and impressive funeral ceremonies ever witnessed in the northwest.

Veterans of five wars participated in the ceremonies. A fluttering but proud trio of Grand Army survivors carried at the head of the cortege the same colors which the old sergeant for years had borne as a color guard. Stalwart young veterans of the World War sent the funeral volley crashing over the patriot's grave.

"Sargint" Flanagan was a native of Greenfield, Mass. In the mid-fifties he joined the mad rush to the gold fields of California. He drifted back to Ohio and joined the 11th Regiment of Ohio Cavalry, serving through the Civil War. Later he enlisted in the Seventh Cavalry at Fort Lincoln.

POPULAR SIGNAL CORPS GIRL

Helen Hunt Carey Carries Off Honors at Chicago With Actress as Opponent.

Motion picture actresses are alluring to Chicago members of the American Legion, but when it comes to a showdown they vote for their ex-service comrades.

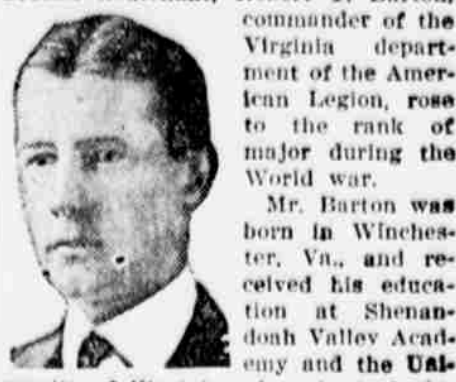


This was demonstrated when Miss Helen Hunt Carey, a former signal corps girl, was voted the most popular girl in Chicago at the Legionnaire club show.

VIRGINIA LEGION MAN WINS

From Second Lieutenant to Major, Was Climb Made by Department Commander.

Entering the military service as a second lieutenant, Robert T. Barton, commander of the Virginia department of the American Legion, rose to the rank of major during the World War.



Mr. Barton was born in Winchester, Va., and received his education at Shenandoah Valley Academy and the University of Virginia, where he took the B. S. and LL. B. degrees. He practiced law from 1914 until 1916, when he went to the Mexican border as a second lieutenant in the Second Virginia Infantry. With the start of the World War, Mr. Barton attended the First Officers' Training camp at Fort Myer, Va., and received a captaincy. He served as a captain in the 313th field artillery at Camp Lee, Va., until he went to France in May, 1918. He participated in the St. Mihiel and Argonne-Meuse offensives and was promoted to a majority.

LEGION MAN IS LAWMAKER

Iowa Ex-Service Boys Are Proud of Their Most Youthful Member of Legislature.

"A fightin' little devil and a captain I'd go plumb to hell for," is the way his sergeant characterized Clyde H. Doolittle, twenty-six-year-old American Legion member, the youngest lawmaker in the Iowa state legislature.



Mr. Doolittle was a law student at Iowa university when war was declared. He attended the First Officers' Training camp and went overseas with the 42nd Division. He participated in six major offensives and was wounded during the Champagne defensive.

Re-entering college upon his return, Mr. Doolittle was elected to the legislature while away from his home. Wise in counsel, an eloquent speaker and a tireless worker for the American Legion, Mr. Doolittle soon placed every Iowa veteran in his debt and was largely responsible for the success of the Legion's legislative program.

UNION MEN LEGION MEMBERS

Kansas Coalfield Center of Hostility, Develops Into First-Prize Membership Locality.

From a center of hostility to the American Legion, to the town which won the first prize, second classification in the Kansas membership contest, is the record of Mulberry, in the coalfields of the Sunflower state.

During the period of the Kansas coal strikes, union laborers misconstrued the attitude of the Legion in regard to industrial disputes. When post officers explained the Legion's principles, the miners were quick to



Legion Men Operating Steam Shovel.

enroll in the ex-service men's organization. Legion men are operating the big steam shovel in the photograph.

Of a membership of sixty-six in Mulberry post, fifty are now union labor men. Forty-six are members of the United Mine Workers of America. The post also includes six merchants, three farmers, three clerks, two doctors and two school teachers.

MEMORY TREES TO SOLDIERS

Plan Proposed to Adorn American Highways Meets With General Approval Throughout Country.

To plant a tree along the great new American highways in honor of every United States soldier, sailor and marine in the World War, is a proposal which has met with the hearty support of the American Legion, G. A. R., Gold Star Mothers and other patriotic organizations. A permanent marker would be placed on each tree, bearing the name of one veteran and his organization, with no indication of rank. A separate inscription would be placed on the trees representing those who died.

Full success of the project means that the great Lincoln highway from New York to San Francisco and the Dixie highway from Chicago to Florida will be fringed with shade trees. President Harding has expressed his approval of the plan and the United States forestry bureau has promised its aid.