



PROJECT MUSE®

## 7. "Polititiation Mutation"

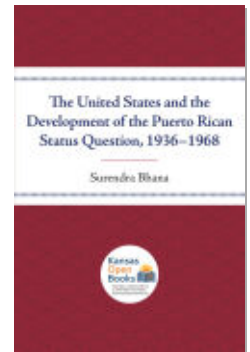
### Published by

Bhana, Surendra.

The United States and the Development of the Puerto Rican Status Question, 1936-1968.

University Press of Kansas, 2023.

Project MUSE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.81118>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/81118>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[172.69.17.68] Project MUSE (2025-04-04 19:03 GMT)

## “Polititiation Mutation”: Public Law 600, July, 1950

Although definite outlines of the Commonwealth status first appeared in 1946, the concept of such a dominion-like plan was not new. Groups of Puerto Ricans had advocated some form of dominion status ever since the island fell under United States rule. There were proposals in the 1920s and the early 1940s that were somewhat like the Commonwealth concept. In 1922, the Union party, which had earlier supported independence, adopted a political formula it called “Associated Free State.”<sup>1</sup> It merged in 1924 with the Republican party whose earlier platform of statehood did not prevent the new alliance from working under the common slogan, “sovereignty within the American sovereignty.”<sup>2</sup> The status position of the alliance did not appear to make a significant impression upon either the United States or the insular electorate by the time that it ruptured in 1930.<sup>3</sup>

In 1943 two groups of Puerto Ricans separately submitted bills to the Roosevelt administration providing for the establishment of a dominion status. Their proposals were in part prompted by the scheduled meeting of the President’s Committee then authorized to consider ways of reforming the Organic Act, and by Senator Tydings’ independence measure then before Congress.<sup>4</sup>

The first group consisted of Enrique Campos del Toro, for-

merly a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, and four others who also had a professional and legal background. It suggested in a twenty-page memorandum that Puerto Rico might develop "a higher degree of statehood" in its relationship with the United States, much as that of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand with Britain within the Commonwealth. The bill accompanying the memorandum proposed extending complete self-government in insular matters, and permitting the Puerto Rican government to enter into trade agreements with foreign governments. The measure also proposed repealing coastwise laws that were adversely affecting Puerto Rican trade.<sup>5</sup>

The second group to offer an alternative bill to the Tydings measure consisted of Teodoro Moscoso and seven other Puerto Ricans representing the professional and business classes. The bill reflected greater concern with economic aspects of the envisaged relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. The "Free State" proposed by the group was roughly equivalent, by its own description, to the Irish Free State within the British Commonwealth. Under such a status, the United States would continue "Free State" relations with Puerto Rico for at least fifteen years. In addition, the United States was to provide for protective measures to help insular industries, establish a minimum sugar quota, and continue refunding customs duties on Puerto Rican goods for twenty years. It was not made clear what was to happen thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

Neither group's proposal was seriously entertained by the administration, largely because it was limiting itself at the time to the consideration of permitting the Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor. Furthermore, Congress was not favorably disposed towards considering at that time any question that involved major changes in the island's political status as long as World War II continued. Nor did the Puerto Ricans show much enthusiasm, primarily because most of them continued to think in terms of independence or statehood.<sup>7</sup>

Two years later Muñoz Marín succeeded in persuading Senator Tydings to incorporate dominion in his 1945 independence bill as one of the alternatives from among which Puerto Ricans could choose. The measure that emerged was the Tydings-Piñero referendum bill. The bill did not adequately define in practical terms what the concept of dominion involved, which was one of the reasons why it failed to excite enthusiasm among members of

the United States Congress. In any case, Senator Tydings himself abandoned it in favor of his conviction that only independence was the right solution to the status question.<sup>8</sup>

By 1946, Muñoz Marín was convinced that both independence and statehood were impractical goals for the immediate and even the near future, the first because of economic reasons and the second because Congress was not favorably disposed to it. The *Popular* leader was fully aware that he had to wean his supporters gradually from the "either independence or statehood" syndrome. He had to persuade Puerto Ricans, many of whom looked to the *Popular* party for the cherished goal of independence, that a dominion status was an honorable alternative that would not compromise their sense of what Tugwell called "dignidad."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the United States, too, had to be persuaded that such a status was a practical solution that in no way would detract from the island's strategic value.

The campaign to reorient the thinking of Puerto Ricans began in earnest in June, 1946, when Muñoz Marín wrote two articles in the San Juan newspaper *El Mundo* at about the time he expelled *independentistas* from the PPD, and to which reference has been made earlier in this study. In these articles, he pointed out Puerto Rico's absolute need of the United States for its economic survival. He argued that production had not kept pace with the population growth, and that the island needed to step up its pace through increased industrialization. Such a program, Muñoz Marín continued, required Puerto Rico's continued free access to United States markets. Since Puerto Rico could not afford to give up its economic relations with the United States, a political solution had to be found outside of the "known classical forms" of independence and statehood. One such solution that the *Popular* leader suggested was what he called *Pueblo Asociado de Puerto Rico*. He did not give any details about it except to say that under it the Puerto Ricans would enjoy complete internal authority, and that sometime in the future, when the island reached certain economic indices, its inhabitants could decide between independence and statehood.<sup>10</sup>

As co-founder and member of the governing body of the PPD, Fernós-Isern also played an influential role in the formulation and implementation of the Commonwealth. He wrote an article in the July 4, 1946, issue of *El Mundo* proposing what was to become later the Commonwealth status.<sup>11</sup> On February 27,



1947, by which time Fernós-Isern had been appointed the new resident commissioner in Washington, he spoke about a "third point of view" at Rollins College, Florida. Careful not to offer the formula as officially that of the insular government, he raised the question, "Why they [the advocates of the "third point of view"] ask, cannot Puerto Rico become a self-governing community with its own democratic constitution, and still retain its present economic relationship with the United States within an adequate political association pattern?"<sup>12</sup>

A year later President Truman visited Puerto Rico (and the Virgin Islands), but it is not known whether insular leaders discussed with him the new plan for dominion status.<sup>13</sup> In May, 1948, however, Fernós-Isern translated the "third point of view" into what he called the "Federated Free Commonwealth" in an address before a group of graduate students from Princeton. In contrast to his Rollins College speech, the resident commissioner openly declared that the Puerto Rican government favored this new status, although not as a permanent but an intermediate solution. He described the process by which the "Federated Free Commonwealth" could be achieved. First, Puerto Ricans must be permitted to appoint their own auditor and justices of the Supreme Court, positions then being named by the president. Second, the limits to which the federal government could intervene in insular matters should be established. Third, the islanders should be permitted to write their own constitution. Fourth, the political and economic relations between the island and the mainland should be perfected, subject to change only by mutual consent.<sup>14</sup> The speech contained the essential features of what was to be the constitution bill two years later.

Muñoz Marín followed up the resident commissioner's suggestion with a major address on July 4, 1948.<sup>15</sup> It also served as a basis for the PPD's campaign in the forthcoming insular elections. The question of political status, the *Popular* leader said, was part of the "whole problem of life" for the Puerto Ricans. Whoever promised to achieve immediate independence or statehood, he continued, "would not be a liberator; he would be an enslaver, a destroyer of freedom in the life of men and women who make up our people; he would be an annihilator of all hope of being able to add political liberty permanently to the other essentials of freedom of the people of Puerto Rico." Muñoz Marín suggested dominion form of government, and urged Congress to

“complete by law” self-government in Puerto Rico without making it a state, but “within the constitutional structure of the United States.” By this he meant that Congress should authorize the Puerto Rican people to draw up their own constitution.<sup>16</sup>

The economic relations between Puerto Rico and the United States, Muñoz Marín continued, must remain basically the same except for lifting the restriction upon the refining of insular sugar. When all this was done, self-government in Puerto Rico would reach the “maximum point,” “which sometimes under the name of autonomy, sometimes under the name of dominion, and sometimes under other names, has been one of the solutions which have, in the past, been put forward in Puerto Rico.” The *Popular* leader clearly stated that this status was to be transitional, for he wanted Congress to pass a law authorizing the insular legislature to submit to a plebiscitary vote the question as to whether Puerto Rico desired independence or statehood “at any time when the Legislature may judge that the economic development will allow it.”<sup>17</sup>

Muñoz Marín’s Fourth of July address was incorporated in the *Popular* party’s platform on August 15, 1948, and therefore also served to initiate the campaign in the first elective governor’s contest in 1948. The PPD platform called first, for the preservation of the economic and fiscal relationship between the island and the mainland. Second, it made public its intention of seeking a constitution drafted by the Puerto Ricans themselves. Third, the party promised that the island’s legislature would convoke, “when it deem[ed] that favorable conditions exist[ed],” a plebiscite to poll Puerto Ricans on three alternatives: independence, statehood, and continuation of dominion status because economic conditions were not yet ripe. The party was having the electorate believe that it did not rule out independence under certain circumstances, partly to undermine the strength of the *independentistas*. Fourth, it would call upon the Congress of the United States to act in accordance with the wishes of the people of Puerto Rico as reflected in the plebiscite on the third point.<sup>18</sup> The PPD nominated Muñoz Marín to run for the governor’s post and Fernós-Isern to continue as the resident commissioner.<sup>19</sup> The mainland Democratic party platform of 1948, incidentally, promised “immediate determination by the people of Puerto Rico as to their final form of government and their ultimate status with respect to the United States.”<sup>20</sup>



The *Partido Estadista Puertorriqueño* (PEP) joined forces with the Socialist party of Bolívar Pagán, and the newly-formed Reform party of Santiago Iglesias Silva, the last party consisting of followers of the defunct Liberal party.<sup>21</sup> The Coalition's candidates for the posts of governor and resident commissioner were Martin Travieso and Luis Ferré, respectively.<sup>22</sup> Its platform advocated statehood as an eventual goal, which was in conformity with the plank offered by the Republican party on the mainland advocating eventual statehood for Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, the PIP promised in their platform the appointment of a legislative committee to decide how independence for Puerto Rico was to be instituted. Its two candidates for governor and resident commissioner were both formerly prominent members of the PPD. They were Dr. Francisco Susoni and Rafael Arjona-Siaca.<sup>24</sup> Corresponding to the PIP's aspirations was the plank of the mainland Progressive party, which stated that the people of Puerto Rico had a right to independence, and that the United States had "an obligation toward . . . [them] to see that they [were] started on the road toward economic success."<sup>25</sup>

The 1948 elections were significant because it was the first time in Puerto Rico's 450 years of history since Columbus' time that its citizens were being permitted to elect their own governor. Furthermore, the island's 872,114 registered voters were being called upon to choose from three major sets of candidates, each one fairly clear on where it stood on the status question.<sup>26</sup> The *Popular* party injected, perhaps deliberately, some confusion by advocating a plebiscite on three alternatives sometime in the future. For the moment, however, Muñoz Marín referred to *independentistas*<sup>27</sup> as dreamers because they failed to realize that Puerto Rico needed the United States for its economic well-being.<sup>28</sup>

Fernós-Isern emerged in the campaign as a leading spokesman for the party's goal of dominion status. Twelve days before the elections, he addressed Puerto Ricans over the air. The resident commissioner spent considerable time explaining how Puerto Rican's fixation with statehood and independence had made their advocates "worshippers in separate sects" when in fact neither was immediately realizable because of the island's economic conditions and because neither could be obtained from Congress. He suggested, therefore, a political and economic union in the form

of a dominion "founded on complete equality" with the United States. Fernós-Isern did not believe that such a status was not "a respectable political status," or that Puerto Rico would deserve to be referred to as a "colony" thereafter. He pointed to the Commonwealth of British Nations and to the statuses of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand within it. "You cannot say," he insisted, "they are inferior or politically subordinate to Britain. They live united by common allegiance to the British Crown. But they live under a democratic regime where the Crown merely represents common citizenship." Fernós-Isern told his listeners how the new status might be implemented: obtaining the right to draw up their own constitution and the authority to elect their auditor and appoint their justices of the Supreme Court. Furthermore, a statute would replace that part of the Organic Act that then served to regulate Puerto Rico-United States relations. He also suggested adjustments to clarify the application of federal laws in Puerto Rico.<sup>29</sup>

The Coalition pointed to the advantages that would follow statehood. With Puerto Ricans in the Senate and the House of the United States, the island would be able to secure the best possible terms for all its marketable commodities, including the lifting of restrictions then on sugar acreage and refining. The PIP accused Muñoz Marín of having abandoned independence as a goal and said that the status could be achieved with the close cooperation of United States legislators.<sup>30</sup>

The PPD scored victories even more convincing than its achievements in 1944. In the gubernatorial contest it received 392,386 votes (over 61 percent), as opposed to the combined votes of 248,328 for the opposition parties. The votes for the opposition were distributed thus: PEP 89,441, Socialist party 64,396, Reform party 29,140, and PIP 65,351. The *Populares* won 17 of the total 19 seats in the Senate and 37 of the 39 seats in the House.<sup>31</sup>

Governor-elect Muñoz Marín interpreted the support his party received as endorsement of the dominion status, and the day after the elections he made public his intention of asking Congress to allow the islanders to write their own constitution.<sup>32</sup> In his inaugural address on January 2, 1949, the governor argued that colonialism was "obsolete" but that ending it with "narrow nationalism" was bad. He pointed out that it was Puerto Rico that needed the United States, and not the other way around, and promised that traces of colonialism in United States-Puerto



Rican relationships would soon be ended.<sup>33</sup> Undersecretary Chapman, who was present at the inauguration, read to the assembly the president's message of felicitation and expressed his faith in the leadership of Muñoz Marín and in the islanders' ability to run their own affairs.<sup>34</sup>

Congress appeared generally willing to extend greater responsibility to Puerto Rico. On January 17, 1949, for instance, Senator Butler of Nebraska introduced a bill to establish in a single man the post of resident commissioner for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and to extend to him, together with delegates from Alaska and Hawaii, the right to vote in the House of Representatives.<sup>35</sup> Governor Muñoz Marín was not too happy about having one man representing both Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.<sup>36</sup> Besides, the Puerto Rican government based the island's unique tax structure, in part, on the general principle that the islanders could not be taxed without representation. Giving a vote to the resident commissioner might open the door in the future for the Puerto Ricans to become eligible for federal taxation and for the tax-exemption laws to be ruled invalid.

In any event, Undersecretary Chapman opposed the bill. In a letter to Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney, chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, he pointed out that there were nearly 2,000,000 Puerto Ricans in contrast to 30,000 Virgin Islanders. Under such circumstances, the needs of the two groups of people could not be adequately represented by one resident commissioner.<sup>37</sup>

In pursuit of the insular government's announced intention of clarifying the rule regarding the application of federal laws in Puerto Rico, Fernós-Isern introduced H.R.3848 in Congress in March, 1949.<sup>38</sup> The bill proposed amending section 58 of the Organic Act so as to provide that all laws originating in Congress should be made specifically applicable to Puerto Rico. The measure aimed at preventing "indirect, automatic, undetected, and accidental amendments" to the Organic Act, the resident commissioner explained to DTIP's new director, James P. Davis. In Fernós-Isern's opinion, the Organic Act was not a general but a special law operating both as a constitution for Puerto Rico as well as a statute of relations between the island and the mainland.<sup>39</sup> The bill did not make any headway, and its provisions would be written into the constitution bill a year later.

In July, 1949, Governor Muñoz Marín visited Washington

to take up the constitution project.<sup>40</sup> On July 5, he discussed it with President Truman. He referred to Puerto Rico, according to Secretary Krug, as a “new state,” not in a legal or formal sense but in the sense that it was in charge of its “own destiny.” There were also references in the memorandum to Puerto Rico’s desire to participate in the Point Four program then being developed by the United States.<sup>41</sup> The governor’s desire to offer technical aid to under-developed countries reflected Puerto Rico’s pride in its progress and confidence in its future. The offer was made partly in response to Puerto Rico’s detractors who claimed that the island was still a colony of the United States. The reactions of the president and the secretary to Muñoz Marín’s “new state” at this stage are not known, but Krug reported later to the president that the State department was favorable to Puerto Rico’s joining the Point Four program.<sup>42</sup>

The governor’s optimism in the coming days suggests that his July 5 meeting with President Truman and Secretary Krug was a favorable one. At a press conference on July 9, 1949, he told reporters, “Our new state is not defined by law but it is already a reality. There are no documents which say that Puerto Rico is a forty-ninth state, but we have facts not documents to demonstrate it.” Since Puerto Rico was already a “new state,” the next step was for the islanders to write their own constitution as in the case of established states, the governor added.<sup>43</sup>

Three days later Muñoz Marín appeared before the House Public Lands Committee to report to it Puerto Rico’s progress. The major part of the more than one hour he spent before a well-attended meeting of the committee was devoted to describing the island’s economic program. Muñoz Marín referred only briefly to the matter of the constitution, assuring the congressmen that the Puerto Ricans’ writing their own constitution did not signify a step toward statehood but the extension of self-government. He concluded, “. . . I would like to leave it [the constitution idea] with you gentlemen for your consideration for action during a future session.”<sup>44</sup> The governor also spoke to full attendance of the House Ways and Means Committee, and was met by individual congressmen interested in Puerto Rico.<sup>45</sup>

Muñoz Marín made an overwhelming impression upon the legislators. The Public Lands Committee, for instance, broke tradition by giving the governor a standing ovation.<sup>46</sup> Secretary Krug noted in his memorandum to the president that the *Popular*



leader had been received by congressmen with "extraordinary cordiality." The secretary continued, "On the whole there is no question that our relations with Puerto Rico are very much better than at any previous period."<sup>47</sup> The reason for the governor's popularity, *La Prensa* reflected, was his ability to be both idealistic and practical, and his emphasis upon the importance of Puerto Rico as a link between Latin America and the United States. Besides, Muñoz Marín was living proof, in the minds of many congressmen, that the United States was opposed to a policy of territorial expansion.<sup>48</sup> The governor himself was pleased with the favorable response that the constitution project had received from congressmen.<sup>49</sup>

But other Puerto Rican leaders were not wholly satisfied about the constitution plan. PEP's leader Celestino Iriarte said that if the new constitution was merely a change in the Organic Act it was not consequential. Socialist leader Pagán argued that true sovereignty could be attained only under statehood or independence. And PIP head Concepción de Gracia insisted that the constitution would not be Puerto Rico's own, but merely an addition to the Organic Act. Two leading insular newspapers were also critical. *El Imparcial* believed that the so-called "new state" was neither "new" nor a "state," while *El Mundo* charged that Muñoz Marín was falsely claiming that Puerto Ricans were in agreement with his plan when he had not consulted them in deciding on the new status.<sup>50</sup>

The governor replied to these charges to the United Press in Washington. He said he was sure that the islanders supported his plan because he was doing no more than fulfilling the program he had campaigned for in 1948. In any case, whatever the final political solution, Puerto Ricans would have the opportunity to decide for themselves in a referendum. Resident Commissioner Fernós-Isern also claimed that the Puerto Rican people knew and understood the distinct type of political state envisaged by the insular government as reflected by their support of the PPD in the 1948 elections.<sup>51</sup> Despite his confidence in the wide support for the constitution plan, Fernós-Isern announced that the bill providing for the constitution would not be presented in 1949 because he wanted Congress to have the maximum time and attention in considering it.<sup>52</sup>

No further reference to the projected constitution appears in the records until December, 1949, when presidential aide Philleo



Nash dispatched a memorandum to one of his colleagues, Stephen J. Spingarn. Nash informed Spingarn that the Interior department had received a request from Muñoz Marín to make an announcement about the constitution plan. The aide believed that the governor had injected a "new note" into the unending debate on political status largely as a reaction to pressures he was feeling from *independentistas* and *estadistas*. He also felt that the project would take about two to three years to complete. It does not appear as if Nash was fully acquainted with the details of the Puerto Rican plan.<sup>53</sup>

On December 28, 1949, the chief of the Caribbean Division of DTIP, Mason Barr, addressed a memorandum to Nash. Barr did not feel that the projected constitution would differ much from that part of the Organic Act providing for autonomy. He felt that its great merit lay in the "psychological advantage" it held out for Puerto Ricans and the rest of the world as another example of the "progressive attitude of the United States toward its territories and so-called 'non-self-governing' areas." He seemed to have some reservations about the dominion concept. Barr said, ". . . dominion, federated state, autonomous state or some other semantical juggling, would be a difficult concept for either Congress, the American people, or the Puerto Rican people to understand."<sup>54</sup> The drafting of the constitution, on the other hand, would not meet opposition, and Barr recommended that the president support this general principle in his State of the Union address.<sup>55</sup> The president, however, did not refer specifically to Puerto Rico or the projected constitution plan in his annual message to Congress in January, 1950, but simply endorsed the policy of a greater measure of self-government for all of the island possessions of the United States.<sup>56</sup>

In January, 1950, Governor Muñoz Marín announced that he would be visiting Washington to work out, among other things, the details of the constitution plan.<sup>57</sup> A few days thereafter, the governor described the process by which Puerto Rico had naturally evolved into a "new kind of statehood" as "polititiation [of polity?] mutation" and stated that the time had come for formalizing it by deliberate action. Three factors, according to Muñoz Marín, had helped in bringing about the "new kind of statehood": first, the island's racial affiliation to Latin America and its political connection with the United States, which made it culturally a "harbor [of] understanding for both main cultures of the hemi-

sphere"; second, Puerto Rico's practically complete self-government; third, its unique fiscal and political arrangement with the United States.<sup>58</sup>

He listed in the same memorandum two ways by which the evolved state could be formalized into a constitutional reality. One, the people of Puerto Rico should be authorized to draft their own constitution and to establish a procedure for amending it, subject only to the limitations continued in Congress' enabling act, such as a bill of rights. Two, Congress should elicit the consent of the insular legislature or of the Puerto Rican people before passing laws that concerned the island's affairs.<sup>59</sup>

Fernós-Isern recalls that he left with Muñoz Marín in December, 1949, the last of the many drafts on the projected constitution bill that he had been working on since his speech of July 4, 1946. The governor was to consult his legal advisors about it and report changes to Fernós-Isern when he arrived in Washington.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, the resident commissioner, now back in Washington, worked to secure the passage of bills that would complement the proposed constitution bill. He happily reported White House support of a bill (H.R.3848) he had sponsored ten months earlier. The measure provided that, unless specifically stated to the contrary, federal laws would not apply to Puerto Rico.<sup>61</sup> Soon thereafter, Fernós-Isern appeared before the Senate Finance Committee to argue in favor of extending the Social Security Act to Puerto Rico.<sup>62</sup>

At the beginning of February, 1950, the resident commissioner announced his intention of introducing a bill providing for the constitution early in the session. In an effort to inform and engender support for the proposed bill, Puerto Rico's Washington office published 15,000 copies of its monthly bulletin containing information about the projected constitution plan and about the island's political status as compared with other non-United States territories whose relationships with a major power were similar.<sup>63</sup>

On February 21, 1950, DTIP's legal counsel Silverman wrote to Fernós-Isern, referring to him in the salutation as "My dear Tony." There was reference in the communication to an earlier discussion of the proposed measure by the two. Silverman said that laws that were going to remain in force after the bill's passage should be mentioned in the measure. He was opposed to using "enabling" in the proposed bill because of its statehood



connotation, and suggested that the word be omitted. Instead he preferred "authorizing." Silverman requested a conference among Fernós-Isern, James Davis, and himself when Governor Muñoz Marín arrived in Washington.<sup>64</sup>

Muñoz Marín arrived in the United States on February 27, 1950.<sup>65</sup> Sometime thereafter the governor met DTIP's director Davis and Silverman. The *Popular* leader told the two administration officials that he envisaged the introduction of a simple bill in Congress authorizing the calling of a constitutional convention to draft a constitution. He listed two absolute conditions that the Puerto Ricans had to honor in writing such a document, namely, that the form of government be republican and that it include a bill of rights. The governor hoped that the proposed measure would contain a provision to exempt federal laws, or parts thereof, from applying to Puerto Rico whenever circumstances warranted it. Such a provision, it was Muñoz Marín's contention, would further the principle of self-government, especially as Puerto Rico did not have voting rights in Congress. The *Popular* leader was careful to point out that the provision was not intended to usurp Congress' power since it would still have the authority of re-enacting laws considered invalid for Puerto Rico by the president.<sup>66</sup>

The governor confided in Davis and Silverman that he preferred to see the bill being presented as an administration measure so as "to preclude any embarrassment in Puerto Rico should it fail of enactment or be passed in some form unacceptable to the Puerto Ricans." The request seems inconsistent with the facts of the entire matter. The constitution project had been advanced by the PPD as part of its program in the 1948 elections. It had received wide publicity. It would appear, therefore, that the governor's position had been misinterpreted or that the memorandum had misstated Muñoz Marín's position. In any event, Muñoz Marín made that request and expressed his intention of conferring with the president and Chapman (who had been promoted from an undersecretary to secretary in place of Krug) and of canvassing for support among majority and minority leaders in Congress.<sup>67</sup>

The governor met with Congressional leaders in the next few days. He visited Representatives Crawford of Michigan, John W. Byrnes of Wisconsin, Stephen M. Young of Ohio, and A. Sidney Camp of Georgia, thanking them for their help in the



past and bidding for their support in the constitution matter.<sup>68</sup> Later he conferred with Senator Butler of Nebraska.<sup>69</sup> On March 5, 1950, the House Public Lands Committee chairman, J. Hardin Peterson, announced his promise to hold hearings on the proposed measure within twenty-four hours of its introduction.<sup>70</sup>

A day later the *Popular* leader conferred for thirty minutes with President Truman in the company of Secretary Chapman. Although no details of the meeting were announced, Muñoz Marín was said to be pleased about its outcome.<sup>71</sup> Sometime during the governor's visit, he conferred with Fernós-Isern about the draft measure that the resident commissioner had left behind in Puerto Rico. The changes of style as recommended by the governor's legal advisors were agreed to.<sup>72</sup> Both the governor and the resident commissioner believed there was no cause for confusion about their plan, despite criticism to the contrary about it by other Puerto Ricans.<sup>73</sup>

Senators O'Mahoney and Butler, who had agreed to be bipartisan co-sponsors of the proposed measure in the Senate, received a draft of the legislation from the governor and the resident commissioner. The draft bill was examined by Stewart French, an aide to Senator O'Mahoney. The memorandum prepared by French found at least three technical defects, one of which was that there was no clearly expressed enabling clause to authorize the election of delegates to the constitutional convention. Even though Puerto Rico was an unincorporated territory, an "enabling or resolving clause" was necessary, much as in the case of incorporated territories that wrote their constitutions preparatory to their becoming states in the Union.<sup>74</sup>

The draft bill represented, according to French's memorandum, all the changes that Governor Muñoz Marín was prepared to accept. For political reasons, the governor wanted the bill introduced without giving the impression that the constitution was a "gift from On High." He wanted it believed that it was Puerto Rico's own idea and that acceptance of the idea of "Associated Statehood" was an independent act freely expressed by the people of Puerto Rico. Furthermore, if the bill was introduced in the present form, Silverman had told French, it would have "the greatest propaganda value in Latin America." French advised the senator to discuss the proposed changes with the governor and the resident commissioner.<sup>75</sup>

An aide to Senator Butler also prepared a memorandum on

the proposed bill. The memorandum stated that the bill, if approved, would not alter the island's status as an incorporated territory. Nor would it deprive Congress of its power to legislate over Puerto Rican matters. "The Congress," the memorandum continued, "can still make any Federal law applicable or inapplicable to Puerto Rico as it sees fit, or pass laws affecting Puerto Rico alone when it is desirable. It can also nullify the Puerto Rican constitution if it wishes, since, technically, Puerto Rico is still a territory subject to the rules and regulations of Congress under the Constitution."<sup>76</sup>

On March 13, 1950, Governor Muñoz Marín appeared before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The governor reported to the committee the economic progress Puerto Rico had made, much as he had done over a year ago before the House Public Lands Committee. In addition, he elaborated upon his constitution project. Muñoz Marín argued that Congress' authorization of Puerto Ricans to write their own constitution was in practice a "shorter step" than the permission it gave to the islanders in 1947 to elect their own governor, yet more "deeply important . . . morally and spiritually." He continued, "It will put them politically and morally on the level with their great democratic practice and their great effort to continue solving the difficult economic problems of Puerto Rico."<sup>77</sup> The senators raised few questions, presumably because by this time most of them had been personally briefed by Muñoz Marín or Fernós-Isern, or otherwise informed by the governor's team of advisors. Indeed, the committee members were so thoroughly impressed by the governor that they gave him a standing ovation at the end of the proceedings.<sup>78</sup>

In this cordial atmosphere, Resident Commissioner Fernós-Isern introduced the constitution bill (H.R.7674) on March 13, 1950.<sup>79</sup> The bill recognized the principle of government by "consent," and its passage would be regarded as having been adopted "in the nature of a compact." It further provided for Congress to authorize the drafting and adopting of a constitution by Puerto Rico, which was to be republican and was to contain a bill of rights. Once the bill passed Congress to become an act, it would be submitted to Puerto Ricans for their approval. The completed constitution was then to be transmitted by the president to Congress. If the transmittal occurred ninety days before the adjournment of the session, and if Congress should fail to act upon the



constitution before the session's termination, the document was to be deemed approved.<sup>80</sup>

Sections 4 and 5 provided that those sections of the Organic Act of 1917 dealing with Puerto Rico–United States relations would be continued under the “Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act.” The “Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act” in effect guaranteed the continuance of the fiscal and political relations between the island and the mainland. Section 6 of H.R.7674 incorporated the provisions of a bill that Fernós-Isern had sponsored on March 28, 1949. It stipulated that upon the request of the insular legislature the president might except Puerto Rico from the application of any federal law that did not specifically apply to the island.<sup>81</sup>

In short, the constitution bill sought to separate the dual functions of the Organic Act of 1917. That part of the Organic Act that dealt with Puerto Rico's internal matters was to be embodied in a constitution drawn up by the island. If the bill should become law, the governor was guaranteed the right of naming his own auditor and justices of the Supreme Court. That part of the Organic Act that was concerned with insular-mainland relations was to be known as the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act. In this connection, the phrase “in the nature of a compact” was important because, as Muñoz Marín and Fernós-Isern interpreted it, there could be no further changes in the Federal Relations Act except with mutual agreement. The phrase was to become a bone of contention two years later.

True to the promise he made a week earlier, House Public Lands Committee chairman Peterson held the first hearing on the constitution bill the day after it was introduced. Governor Muñoz Marín was the only witness to testify on that day. The constitution bill, the governor insisted, did not represent a step either to independence or statehood, and Congress' passage of the measure did not imply its commitment in the future to grant either one of the two. Muñoz Marín believed that the Puerto Ricans should have full right to amend the constitution except in areas where the bill stipulated that they could not. “I would hope,” he added, “that only basic exceptions of principles should be made, in order to recognize the dignity of the Puerto Rican people in the exercise of their democratic wisdom.”<sup>82</sup>

Leading backers of the constitution bill worked to win support for the measure. At the request of Arnold Miles, director of



the Bureau of the Budget, DTIP's director Davis wrote on March 16, 1950, explaining details of the bill. Davis explained the distinction between incorporated and unincorporated territories and reassured Miles that the bill's passage would not change Puerto Rico's status as an unincorporated territory and that the island's political and financial arrangement *vis à vis* the United States would remain unchanged. Davis described Puerto Rico's new status as "much akin" to that of a state in the Union.<sup>83</sup> Ten days later, Secretary Chapman explained the constitution bill and expressed his support for it over the National Broadcasting Company.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, Stewart French submitted to Senators O'Mahoney and Butler a memorandum on his discussion with Fernós-Isern, preparatory to the senators' co-sponsoring the constitution bill. There were disagreements of points of view between French and Fernós-Isern. French believed that a joint resolution instead of a bill might be better to get Congress to approve the constitution project. In the end, however, he accepted Fernós-Isern's argument in favor of a bill. In the matter of "compact," the resident commissioner insisted upon retaining it because of the "desirability of such language." French apparently agreed because he found precedent of the "compact" idea in the Enabling Act of the Northwestern Territory. On another matter, namely, the delegation of legislative power to the president in case Congress failed to act upon the constitution within a specified period of time, French registered his opposition, "in theory" at least. But Senator O'Mahoney's aide was sympathetic to Fernós-Isern's argument that it would not be wise to allow the islanders to complete the constitution only to have Congress, pressed by "more immediately momentous matters," fail to act upon it.<sup>85</sup>

A revised draft of the bill, presumably prepared by French, accompanied the memorandum. It incorporated at least two important changes. The first was that the constitution had to be "accepted freely by a majority of the people of Puerto Rico." The second change concerned the length of time after which the constitution would become effective if Congress should fail to act upon it. French's revised draft stipulated that if the constitution was transmitted to Congress within thirty days of a legislative session, and if after one year of such transmittal Congress had still not taken action, the constitution would be deemed approved.<sup>86</sup>

If Senators O'Mahoney and Butler had any doubt as to whether the constitution bill had popular insular support, it was in part allayed by a joint resolution adopted by the Puerto Rican legislature on March 30, 1950. The resolution fully endorsed the measure.<sup>87</sup> The following day, eighteen days after Fernós-Isern had sponsored H.R.7674, Senators O'Mahoney and Butler introduced a companion bill designated as S.3336.<sup>88</sup> The Senate version of the constitution bill did not differ significantly from its counterpart in the House. S.3336 had added to it two "whereas" clauses concerning Congressional recognition of Puerto Rico's right of self-government. Section 2 of the Senate bill also added a provision not present in the House version. The Puerto Rican people were specifically authorized to call a constitutional convention. Other provisions dealing with the transmittal of the constitution to Congress, its fate should that body not take action within the legislative session, and the applicability of federal laws in Puerto Rico were left very much as they were in Fernós-Isern's bill.<sup>89</sup> The senators accepted Stewart French's recommendation with respect to the "whereas" clauses and the insertion of an "enabling" clause but rejected the recommendation concerning the extension to one year of the time in which Congress could take action on the constitution.<sup>90</sup>

In a statement released to the press by the two senators, it was pointed out that the bill had popular insular backing and that it was a significant step in the advancement of self-government. The senators cautioned, however, against interpreting the measure as a step in the direction of either independence or statehood. They maintained that the bill would not affect Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States.<sup>91</sup>

The administration indicated its support for the bill. President Truman directed the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of the Budget to forward favorable reports to Congress.<sup>92</sup> Secretary Chapman wrote a letter on April 28, 1950, to Congressman Peterson strongly endorsing the constitution bill. Congress, he argued, would continue to have the power to determine the island's ultimate status in the future. The bill's passage, the secretary continued, would not commit Congress to statehood legislation in the future. In a memorandum that accompanied the letter, Chapman concurred with the proposed amendments to H.R. 7674 as incorporated in the Senate companion bill.<sup>93</sup>

On May 16, 1950, the House Public Lands Committee con-



ducted for the second time hearings on the constitution measure. All those who appeared before the committee endorsed the bill, although the memoranda, letters, and telegrams of those who opposed the measure were inserted in the records. The witnesses who appeared in person, furthermore, were connected in one way or another with the administrations of President Truman and Governor Muñoz Marín. Edward G. Miller, Jr., assistant secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, endorsed the measure because it was in accordance with the United States' policy of extending greater self-government to dependent peoples. A letter from Assistant Secretary of State Jack K. McFall was read into the hearings. McFall commented on the bill's significance in an international context, saying that, "In view of the importance of 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' in anti-American propaganda, the Department of State feels that H. R. 7674 would have great value as a symbol of the basic freedom enjoyed by Puerto Rico, within the larger framework of the United States of America."<sup>94</sup>

Another witness was Representative Walter A. Lynch of New York, who had recently traveled to the island as one of the members of the House Ways and Means Committee to examine Puerto Rico's tax relationship with the United States. He used facts and figures to illustrate the fiscal relationship between the island and the mainland and reassured the committee that the bill would not alter it. The Department of the Interior was represented by DTIP director Davis who, in endorsing the bill, referred the committee to the April 28, 1950, letter from Secretary Chapman to Congressman Peterson, previously cited.<sup>95</sup>

Associate Justice A. Cecil Snyder of the Puerto Rican Supreme Court emphasized in his testimony that the bill embodied a "new, bold, unique, ingenious, creative and dynamic concept," while insular Senator Victor Gutiérrez pointed out that the bill had received the support of eighteen of the nineteen senators and thirty-eight of the thirty-nine representatives in a joint insular resolution. Fernós-Isern sought in his testimony to reassure congressmen who may have had some doubts about aspects of the bill. The phrase "in the nature of a compact," he said, was based on the principle of mutual consent in which Puerto Rico and the United States would jointly decide upon future changes in their relationship with each other. The will of Congress, Fernós-Isern continued, would prevail in whatever form and manner federal authority in Puerto Rico would be exercised. The constitution

bill would not alter the powers of sovereignty acquired by the United States in 1898 by the Treaty of Paris. Then he reiterated a point, which, judging by the number of times it was repeated, must have bothered many congressmen: passage of the measure would not commit Congress to be either for or against any specific form of political formula for Puerto Rico in the future.<sup>96</sup>

After Fernós-Isern's appearance, no more witnesses were heard. In the communications that appear in the text, several persons opposed the bill for one reason or another. Juan B. Soto, professor of law at the University of Puerto Rico, questioned the essential premise upon which the constitution plan was based in a memorandum he had prepared at the request of the PEP. He said that a constitution was derived from the original sovereignty of the people, and as such it could be revoked only by the authority that made it. If the United States approved the bill, it would in effect be recognizing the inherent sovereignty of the people of Puerto Rico and relinquishing the rights and powers of sovereignty it acquired in 1898. If this indeed was so, the professor continued, the United States was not obliged to grant financial aid to Puerto Rico. It might even lead Puerto Rico, Soto implied, to an undefined legal status from which statehood might not be possible.<sup>97</sup>

*Independentista* leader Gilberto Concepción de Gracia stated his objection more strongly. He said, "We vehemently repudiate any constitution subject to amendment, repeal, suspension, control, or alteration by Congress or by any other power foreign to the people of Puerto Rico themselves." He argued that neither Congress nor Muñoz Marín had ever been entrusted with the power of constitution-making, which belongs "historically, juridically, and politically" only to the people of Puerto Rico. All opponents of the bill argued that the committee should hold hearings in Puerto Rico to give those persons unable to travel to Washington an opportunity to be heard.<sup>98</sup>

The following day a subcommittee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee conducted hearings on S.3336. The same persons who had appeared the previous day at the House Public Lands Committee hearings presented their arguments to the Senate subcommittee. Much of what they said was essentially if not exactly the same as their testimonies the day before.<sup>99</sup> The Senate subcommittee was aware of the criticism that many opponents of the bill could not come to Washington to testify for



a variety of good reasons. But Senator O'Mahoney did not think it possible to hold hearings in Puerto Rico because it would cause delay and probably also kill all chance of the bill's passage.<sup>100</sup>

Secretary Chapman dispatched a memorandum to Senator O'Mahoney analyzing the constitution bill and urging its passage. Since it appears as if the senator was already persuaded about the merits of the bill at that stage, the secretary's memorandum was presumably intended to clarify aspects not yet clear or to emphasize the importance he attached to its passage.<sup>101</sup> In any event, the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs approved the bill with amendments on May 26, 1950.<sup>102</sup> The committee altered the language of the bill as introduced by Fernós-Isern to provide specifically for a referendum among Puerto Ricans to accept or reject the act authorizing the writing of the constitution.<sup>103</sup> This clarification appears to be in deference to legitimate criticism that opponents of the bill had not been given sufficient opportunity to be heard. It did not wish to be open to a charge later that the bill had been railroaded by committee members.

The Senate committee struck out section 3, which had provided that if Congress failed to take action after the president had transmitted the constitution it would be deemed approved. Congress would not agree, it would appear, to a move that implied blanket endorsement and thereby would undermine its claim of authority over insular affairs. The committee was probably similarly motivated in eliminating section 5. This section concerned federal laws specifically applicable to Puerto Rico. Despite these amendments, the Senate committee's approval of the bill was a major breakthrough. The committee gave a number of reasons in its appraisal for its favorable consideration. The first group of factors concerned the popular support for Governor Muñoz Marín and the strong endorsement given the bill by the departments of Interior and State. The second group of factors was that the bill did not envisage substantive changes in insular-mainland relations and that it did not seek to bind Congress to a final political status. The third group of factors was that the bill was in agreement with the principle of extending self-government, as embodied in the United Nations Charter, and that its enactment would enhance the prestige of the United States in the eyes of the dependent peoples of the world.<sup>104</sup>

The chairman of the House Public Lands Committee, Representative Peterson, did not express an opinion on the Senate

amendments, but said he would hear opponents of the bill in the week of June 5, most notably Representative Marcantonio of New York.<sup>105</sup> On June 8, 1950, the Senate passed the constitution bill as reported to it by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The bill was one of the 229 measures passed without objection.<sup>106</sup>

On the same day that the Senate passed the constitution bill, the House Committee on Public Lands held hearings to give the measure's opponents an opportunity to express their views. Congressman Marcantonio, who had introduced a bill on March 16, 1950, to make Puerto Rico a sovereign state, was the first to testify. His testimony consisted of two parts. The first was a speech he had made in Congress on March 16, 1950, and which he had printed in the hearings. In it, the member of the American Labor party charged that the bill was a "snare" and a "delusion" intended to continue the system of "imperialism." The measure, he explained, evaded the real issue of Puerto Rico's ultimate status and continued to give the United States veto power and exclusive jurisdiction in a number of areas. Marcantonio said that Muñoz Marín had falsely built a reputation of being a champion of the *jibaros* when in fact he connived with the "Wall Street Crowd" in implementing "Operation Bootstrap," which he called "Operation Booby Trap."<sup>107</sup>

In the second part of his testimony, Marcantonio charged Muñoz Marín and Fernós-Isern of having deceived the Puerto Rican people in the November, 1948, elections. He based his assertion on a comparison of speeches made by Muñoz Marín in July, 1948, and by Fernós-Isern in October, 1948, with the promises contained in the 1948 PPD platform. Representative Marcantonio said that there were two constitutional steps involved in the bill, when in fact the PPD platform had given the impression that only one was necessary to resolve Puerto Rico's ultimate status. Fernós-Isern contested this point in a lively debate with Marcantonio. The New York congressman was the only opponent to appear in person.<sup>108</sup>

Other opponents of the constitution bill made their positions clear by communications to the committee. PIP leader Concepción de Gracia lamented the haste with which the committee sought to pass the bill. Celestino Iriarte, president of the PEP, desired to see a provision inserted in the bill that stated that nothing in it implied a denial of Puerto Rico's right to statehood



in the future. He also hoped that the phrase "in the nature of a compact" would not be interpreted to mean that future Congresses could not act favorably on statehood. *Independentistas* Rafael Arjona-Siaca and Rafael Pérez-Marchand submitted a long memorandum about legal aspects of the measure. They argued that the bill was juridically deceptive because the "compact" idea was meant to give the impression that Puerto Ricans voluntarily accepted their "colonial" position, when in fact the powers of Congress could not be "in the least compacted, covenanted, contracted, bargained, or in any way affected by this legislation." They argued that the bill sheltered a hidden motive, "No matter what the efforts to conceal the facts, the present relations between the Puerto Ricans and the United States will continue as they are, not by the consent of the people of Puerto Rico but because in the bill Congress had expressly decreed their permanence." All those opposed to the bill's passage requested that hearings be held in Puerto Rico.<sup>109</sup>

Congressman Peterson appeared to believe that opponents of the constitution measure should be given further opportunity to be heard.<sup>110</sup> But on June 14, 1950, three days after he expressed such sentiments, the Public Lands Committee approved the bill in an executive session behind closed doors.<sup>111</sup> The measure as reported out by the House committee incorporated the amendments made by the Senate committee two weeks earlier.<sup>112</sup> On June 19, 1950, the bill was referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.<sup>113</sup> At this point it was generally believed that the measure would pass Congress before July 4.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, Muñoz Marín hoped that this would happen, because its passage would give the insular government the opportunity "to add local significance to national celebration [Fourth of July], and would also lend itself to wider publication throughout the world."<sup>115</sup>

On June 28, 1950, the House Rules Committee placed the bill on the calendar for debate lasting for one hour on the House floor.<sup>116</sup> Two days later the House debated the constitution bill. There was "unusually strong" support, as Silverman wrote Muñoz Marín.<sup>117</sup> Among those congressmen who expressed support for the bill was one group that based its confidence in Puerto Ricans in general and Muñoz Marín in particular. Another group that endorsed the measure did so in the knowledge that Congress retained the right to decide on Puerto Rico's final political status.

Still another group that voted affirmatively was moved by a sense of paternalism towards Puerto Rico. Said Republican Congressman Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, “. . . you cannot expect to take a child in the third grade or sixth grade and move him up into a postgraduate school without the various grades between.”<sup>118</sup>

Another Republican, Congressman Jacob K. Javits of New York, had some reservations about the bill. The measure, in his opinion, restricted Puerto Ricans to only one alternative, namely, the present status, and even that only with prior Congressional approval. If Puerto Rico could frame its own constitution, he added, it could also decide on whether it desired independence or statehood. He was, therefore, in favor of recommitting the bill for striking out sections 4 and 5. The strongest opposition came from Representative Marcantonio, who charged that the measure was a deliberate attempt by Muñoz Marín to mislead the islanders. But his motion to recommit the bill to the committee failed decisively: 1 in favor, 260 opposed, and 169 not voting. Thereafter the bill was passed by a voice vote. Both Republicans and Democrats supported the measure, which suggests that Puerto Rican autonomy was a bipartisan concern of United States legislators.<sup>119</sup>

On the first day of July both the Senate and the House, having reached agreement on the constitution bill, presented it to the president for his signature. On the same day that the House debated the bill, the Department of the Interior requested the Budget Bureau to recommend to the president the acceptance of the bill.<sup>120</sup> On July 3, 1950, President Truman signed the bill into Public Law 600, despite appeals by *independentistas* and *estadistas* that he should not.<sup>121</sup> Public Law 600 stipulated that it be submitted to the Puerto Ricans for their acceptance or rejection. If accepted, the government of Puerto Rico was authorized to call a constitutional convention to draft a constitution that had to provide a republican form of government and include a bill of rights. Upon the Puerto Ricans' adopting the constitution, the president of the United States was authorized to transmit it to Congress. If Congress should approve the constitution, the provisions of the act were to go into effect: the constitution was to become effective in internal matters, while that part of the Organic Act of 1917 that concerned Puerto Rico–United States relations was to continue in force as the “Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act,” as provided by section 4 of Public Law 600. The law did not set a time limit for the entire procedure.<sup>122</sup>



Muñoz Marín and Fernós-Isern regarded the act as a victory for all Puerto Ricans. They both pointed out its great significance at the Fourth of July celebrations in San Juan. The resident commissioner urged the *independentistas* and *estadistas* among the islanders to take the opportunity of hanging their "hammocks" of independence and statehood, instead, "under the shade of the tree which sprouts into this new concept of life of liberty in confederation." Who knows, he continued, the natural evolution of this "new federative formula" might make the old dilemma disappear from everybody's mind.<sup>123</sup>

The striking fact about the implementation of the first portion of Puerto Rico's Commonwealth project was the relative ease with which the insular leaders secured the passage of Public Law 600. A congeries of reasons persuaded the United States that it was in her interest to enact such a law. The law offered her the opportunity to respond to charges that Puerto Rico was a colony of the Colossus of the North. Congress retained the phrase "in the nature of a compact," despite its legal vagueness, as evidence of its good faith, because such language created the impression that Puerto Rico was by her own choice entering into a relationship with the United States. The comments of at least two mainland newspapers might have reflected the exaggerated significance attached to Public Law 600 by some congressmen and administration officials. The *Boston Globe* believed that the Puerto Rican story was one that the "Voice of America should trumpet throughout Asia." The *Washington Post* argued that in the island's political progress "a more effective riposte to Soviet yelpings about American imperialism could scarcely be presented to the world."<sup>124</sup>

The more important consideration that went into resolving Congress' mind, however, was the nature and extent of the change envisaged by Public Law 600. The United States was not called upon to make a substantive change in Puerto Rico's existing status but merely to improve upon it and to formalize it in a brilliantly conceived constitutional scheme. Puerto Rico gained complete control of its internal affairs within a federal relationship that was unique because of its fiscal and tax relationship with the United States. The envisaged status did not undermine the United States' role in maintaining the island's position as a strategic outpost nor its supremacy in Puerto Rico's foreign affairs. And the administrations of President Truman and Governor

Muñoz Marín repeatedly stressed the fact that Congress was not relinquishing its hegemony on the matter of Puerto Rico's ultimate political status.

A factor of considerable importance was the personality and politics of Muñoz Marín. The governor's innovativeness inspired among United States lawmakers a kind of enthusiastic confidence in Puerto Rico's future that paved the way for Public Law 600. Of no less importance was the dedicated and intelligent efficiency of Resident Commissioner Fernós-Isern, who worked assiduously to see the realization of a concept that had germinated in his mind. He it was who appeared before committees, conferred and consulted with Congressional leaders and administration officials, and piloted the measure through Congress. The resident commissioner worked closely with administration officials whose help was vital to the passage of the constitution. They were, among others, Chapman, Davis, Barr, Silverman, Philleo Nash, and Stephen J. Spingarn. The help of Congressional leaders too was invaluable. Congressman Peterson, Senators O'Mahoney, Butler, and Herbert H. Lehman of New York were among the many who shared in the aspirations of Muñoz Marín and Fernós-Isern. Together they established a solution, which in the words of the *New York Times* was a "notable example of enlightened control from a governing power and energetic, intelligent progress on the part of the governed."<sup>125</sup>