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ARE THE PORTO RICAN PEOPLE PREPARED FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT

SPEECH

OF

HON. LUIS MUÑOZ RIVERA

IN THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES
OF PORTO RICO

EXTRACT FROM REMARKS

OF

HON. TULIO LARRINAGA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Are the Porto Rican People Prepared for Self-Government?

[Speech of Hon. Luis Muñoz Rivera, in the House of Delegates of Porto Rico.]

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OF

HON. TULIO LARRINAGA,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Friday, May 8, 1908.

The House having under consideration the bill (H. R. 18618) fixing the status of the Porto Rico Provisional Regiment of Infantry—

Mr. LARRINAGA, in part, spoke as follows:

The press of the United States is full of slanders. The gentleman from Texas [Mr. SLAYDEN] the other day asked unanimous consent to put in the RECORD a letter published in the New York World that contained a good many inaccurate statements about Porto Rico and very wrongly interpreted a speech made by our leader in the house of delegates. Mr. Chairman, I have here a translation of that speech, and I ask unanimous consent of the House to have it inserted in the RECORD, so that the two papers may be compared.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Porto Rico asks unanimous consent to insert in the RECORD certain papers mentioned by him. Is there objection?

There was no objection.

Mr. LARRINAGA. The gentleman from Texas, who is a fine Spanish scholar, can compare the original Spanish speech with the translation.

The speech to which I referred, and asked to have inserted in the RECORD, is as follows:

MESSRS. DELEGATES. We followed yesterday with extraordinary interest the brilliant report of the Speaker in his journey from Porto Rico to Oyster Bay, and from Oyster Bay to Porto Rico, stopping at New York, Washington, and Jamestown. I asked for a vote of gratitude for Mr. De Diego; the House unanimously and enthusiastically

agreed to it. In commenting afterwards my ideas, somebody may have thought that there were disagreements and discrepancies between my illustrious compatriot who rendered the country such eminent services and myself. There are no such disagreements; there are no discrepancies. Mr. De Diego and I are going together in the same direction, and to-day, as well as yesterday, and to-morrow as well as to-day, we were always and will always be, in perfect accord in the idea and in absolute conformity in the procedure.

President Roosevelt, Secretary Taft, and Speaker CANNON came one day to Porto Rico. The three of them as if moved by the same impulse, declared that the people of Porto Rico were not prepared for self-government. In answering such statements which the people of Porto Rico find to be offensive to their dignity we drew and we sent our memorial. Mr. De Diego was the bearer of that extensive document; he delivered it personally to President Roosevelt; he accompanied it with eloquent periods; he strengthened it with his genial argumentation, and, gentlemen, he received in exchange the affirmation that the status was but only temporary.

New Mexico has lived under the régime for sixty years, and when it asks to be admitted as a State of the Union, the press answers it—I have read it in the New York papers—that New Mexico is not prepared; that New Mexico speaks Spanish, and does not yet possess the American spirit. If we are to wait sixty years for our autonomy, the present generation will have passed away, two more generations after us will pass, and we shall have gone not only through suffering and anguish, but we will have suffered, also, humiliation and shame. A people with dignity does not resign itself to this, but it arises and protests. When the lash is raised, the people protest in the same act—the same as I now protest, at this very moment, in the name of the people of Porto Rico. We saw the American Army land on our southern coast; we saw them advance through the roads of the interior; we heard the promises of General Miles; we knew the history of the United States, and this country almost unanimously—and I say "almost unanimously" because I never shared this mirage—believed that we were to be granted the liberties enjoyed in North America, and that there was to be a place for our country in the community of the free peoples of the world. Military rule was established. We understood it, and we accepted it. Such a transitory condition was imposed by the circumstances, and it was our duty to facilitate their work. We afforded such facilities. And after that came the civil régime, in which we put high and noble confidence. Governors arrived on our shores, there remained, and then left; but under them all a grave injustice was committed. The Porto Ricans, the natives of the island, were always placed under the Americans, the strenuous in the island.

It is the Venezuelans who rule in Venezuela, the French in France, the Teutons in Germany, and thus in all the other places of the globe. In Porto Rico the Porto Ricans do not govern; on the contrary, it is the will of a few functionaries, to whom the mission of civilizing and administering them is given, who rule. And it is not possible to suffer in silence that such a system should continue, and, at any price, it is necessary to speak the naked truth of our profound sorrow. The crudest argument used to refuse the recognition of our personality is the never-ending ritornello that we are not prepared. This is the eternal reason given by the strong who oppress the weak. Gentlemen, we must always bear in mind that in the opinion of the masters the servants are never prepared to come out of servitude. Thus in the opinion of the colonizing nations it never happened that they should

consider their colonies prepared to enjoy the splendors of liberty. Such a phrase should not be allowed to a stranger; it is an insult. Much less should it be on the lips of a Porto Rican. And it is really very hard that a very few of our compatriots should also give utterance to it. There is no such thing as a slave country before God and nature. God and nature made free all countries on earth.

As to the Dominicans, to the Cubans—and I cite them because they are our nearest neighbors—ask them if they are prepared to govern themselves, and one single cry will answer the question from one end to the other of our sister islands; you will hear that single cry resounding in the highest mountains and in the seas, "We are free men; we want to be free men." Unfortunately the Porto Ricans are not, and it is for this reason that in struggling against a personal tyrannical government, there should rise at every step in our public life the acknowledgment of our sorry vassalage. But if it was given to open the breast of every one of the Porto Ricans, if it was possible to see into the collective soul of this million of human beings inhabiting this forgotten rock, we would find therein written in indelible characters, the word "Independence." [Continued applause.] This magnificent word has not yet been pronounced in this chamber as an energetic demand. Only my illustrious friend, Dr. Zeno Gandia wrote it in the declaration of principles of the Union of Porto Rico. Only my other illustrious friend, Mr. De Diego, supported it in brilliant periods in the Convention of Olimpo amidst the most resounding applause as that which is now heard here. It is a confirmed idea; it is a sentiment which has been ratified. It is a sentiment and the opinion of the popular masses; condensed in the pen of the writers in the voice of their tribunes. It is the Porto Rican conscience taking real existence and going up to Heaven as a complaint against our cruel destiny.

It is necessary for me to analyze and destroy the theory of our lack of preparation. The people of Cuba have our same origin, our own education, the same customs, but the people of Cuba were formed in the fight against tyranny. Cuba is in possession of the spirit of war; Porto Rico in the spirit of mansuetude and peace. The Congress of the United States recognized that Cuba deserves her independence and denies to Porto Rico self-government. And while Cuba expects that her ties should be broken, Porto Rico is less than a tribe, for tribes struggle and fight for their honor and existence. Porto Rico is but a pack of illards, submissive to the hard caprice of its masters. And maybe some one will wonder that a citizen may pronounce these words in this Chamber. For those who may so think I have only my most generous pity.

Another reason, which they find of great weight, is given by our governing masters to prove the native inaptitude. This is the reason of our illiteracy. True it is that there are about 700,000 natives who do not know the first elements of learning. But what could we say of Syracuse and Alexandria, of Athens and Rome, which in the highest period of their progress barely had 5 per cent of learned men? Diffusion of learning began only shortly before the conquest of America, when Gutenberg discovered the art of fixing ideas on printed paper.

And yet the great civilizations of China and India had had their development; that civilization had gone over to the Greek and the Roman, had propagated through Gaul and Germany; nationalities arose, and in the somber centers of the middle ages the modern spirit was taking shape. With that 95 per cent of illiterates the Roman Empire reaches its great power and its splendid glory, the civil republic, in which the multitudes climbed to the Aventino Mountain and the czars

went down to the Tarpeyan Rock. We, the descendents of that cyclopean effort, having inherited Latin culture, and having 30 per cent of literates, are doomed to see how the aptitude for self-government is denied to us.

One more argument which is used against us is the mixture of races in our country. The same exists in Cuba; in the United States there are 9,000,000 of colored people; and nobody would ever think that the Cubans and the Americans are not prepared for the self-government they enjoy. In Abysinnia there is a negro government; in Hayti the government is also of negroes; in Liberia, a creation of the American genius, the government is also of negroes. All nations established in Africa are constituted by negroes. Go and propose to them that they should renounce their liberties, and that they should submit to a master. They live happy in their homes, and their only misfortune is that every now and then the European thinks of them to go and enslave them.

And when this thing happens, the Sulus fight against the English, and the Abyssinians of Menelick rout the Italians of Baratiere. And when those people succumbed something in nature protests against the abuse of those who with their guns carry out their method and their plans. The colored people of Porto Rico, who fraternize with us, who jointly with us are in the struggle, show their aptitude for the exercise of political functions. And in this particular point we are superior to the United States, where the negro lives like a pariah in isolation and in the inferiority imposed by the white man.

I maintain that there is no reason to withhold from us the administration of our own business, of our own affairs.

The argument used by Spain in her colonies of America; that England used for her colonies of Africa; that France uses in Madagascar, and Russia in Finland and Poland, is a false argument that does not resist examination. Japan affirms that Korea is not prepared; the United States thinks that the Philippine Islands are not prepared. Ah, Mr. Delegates, we know that a country that one day was not prepared according to its masters, the next day was found to be prepared when it took hold of the sword and the gun and vindicated for itself by its right and its force. Thus, it seems to appear that there is no other road than the roads leading to the woods, if such a preparation is to be effected.

It is necessary that the victims should raise their voices and give vent to their sufferings. I raise my voice in the name of those victims. If I were alone, if I were to be left alone in the undertaking, I would live and die satisfied of having done my duty. [Great applause.] We Porto Ricans had a hundred causes of affection toward Spain. She gave us her blood, her laws, her language, and the pride of her legendary traditions and of her remarkable progress. The Madrid press received us fraternally when we went to claim firmly our rights; and yet we were called rebels. I was born in 1859. Spain retired from our shores in 1898, and although in my spirit the Spanish spirit was firmly rooted, never from my lips there came the hail of "Long live Spain!" Neither from the balconies of my home was the Spanish flag seen to wave, because more than a Spaniard I was a Porto Rican, and before the sovereignty of the nation I defended the autonomy of my country. In 1897 we went to Madrid and said: "Here comes the daughter to demand justice at the hands of the mother. Here comes Porto Rico to claim for the last time the recognition she deserves. If what we demand is not given to us, we shall return to Porto Rico; but we shall return by the way of New York."

To return by way of New York, Messrs. Delegates, meant open rebellion, with guns in our hands. Our rights were recognized, and we returned directly to Porto Rico, and right after us came a system of government more complete and more dignified than that of Canada and Australia.

Our hard feelings were turned into sincere love, because servitude had disappeared, because liberty was dawning. The same would occur in regard to the Americans. Before 1898 and after 1898 they had the confidence of our fellow-citizens. Their tricolor flag was hailed with respect and fondness. They arrived, and our sympathetic friendship continued, because we thought that the freedom enjoyed by the United States would be extended to Porto Rico, no longer in the form of the Latin autonomy of Moret and Sagasta, but in the shape of Anglo-Saxon autonomy prevailing in the British colonies. Instead of that we had the military government first and afterwards the civil government, with the Foraker Act, within which we see its autonomic and independent petty kings arising. This is the only kind of autonomy, the only kind of independence, that we have in Porto Rico. It would seem impossible that a people, speaking of our aptitude, would create bossism so absurd.

The statesmen at Washington thought that they had reached the limit of aptitude, and, in fact, they reached incredible anarchy. Those petty kings constitute a six-headed government; there is no government rule here, but misrule. The insular house, the only legitimate organism representing the people, carries out a useless labor, always wrecked on that perpetual reef, the executive council, formed of six Americans from the continent and six Americans from the island, appointed by the President of the United States.

The office of governor of the island is not a desirable one. The governor, in his relations to the system, lacks force and prestige, because as powerful as he, and even more so, are the heads of the departments, and the governor, in fact, is the one who governs the least; the direct power, the administrative functions are concentrated in the six offices which often act at variance with the governor. And in this way it is impossible to establish a fixed criterion, or a fixed policy. The leaders of the parties must confer with the governor, and with the six secretaries who are equal to the governor, and it often happens that in the executive mansion and in the various departments there are seven different opinions. It is a perfect gamut, with all the different tones, without the baton or the conductor being able to bring the whole orchestra into unison. [Great applause interrupts the orator.]

The inventors of this labyrinth find pleasure in repeating that we are not prepared. I wish to return this charge word for word, affirming here and repeating that the American statesmen are not prepared to govern foreign colonies so different in character and of such peculiar civilization. [Continued applause.] Four petitions did our house of delegates send to the President of the United States. None of them had the good fortune or the honor of an answer. President Roosevelt recommended to Congress that we should be made American citizens. Congress ignored the benevolent recommendation. I would say to Speaker CANNON, to that gentleman who, in our own house of delegates, reminded us of our so-called inferiority, I would tell Mr. CANNON that if American citizenship is going to be granted to us without the full rights of an American citizen; if it is only to consist in a mere formula, we prefer our Porto Rican citizenship. They may be proud of what belongs to them. I fully understand it, since there does not exist in the world a greatness superior to the greatness of

the United States. But here we are proud of what belongs to us, that although poor and rachitic, it is our own. [Great applause.]

Mr. De Diego, my dear friend, and the worthy speaker of this house, gave us an account of his excursion through the United States in phrases admirable for their patriotism and rhetorical forms; that excursion was perhaps the most fruitful of all that have been carried out in representation of Porto Rico. I had the honor to go and plead the cause of my country in 1899. I accomplished nothing. Delegates from the Republicans, from the Federals, from the commerce and the agriculture, were later sent there. They accomplished nothing. In 1900 and 1902 the Republican party won the elections in the island, and sent to Washington one of our most competent men, my good friend and affectionate opponent, Mr. Degetau. He accomplished nothing. In 1904 and 1906 the Unionist party sent to Washington a man of exceptional energy and of very high intellect, Mr. LARRINAGA. It is already four years that he has been exerting himself to obtain a change, a reform. He has assiduously struggled. I have received his letters every week. As I read them I feel as though a cold wave would pervade my soul.

The intelligence and push of our Commissioner is powerless to make us advance one single step. It was necessary for us to send to Washington, as it was more direct, if possible, and we sent the speaker of our house of delegates. He went, talked, struggled, until he lost his health. He returned sick in health, and was only told that our régime was merely temporary. In spite of all this, I shall not advise my country to prepare for a fight with the machete and the gun in the mountains. I shall reach my speech to the point when I shall offer my own solution. I regret that at this very moment the ghost of Betances and Baldorioty, Acosta Celiand Vizcarroudo, and Ruiz Velvis, and a hundred other illustrious dead can not rise from their sepulchers and lend me their energies, so as to not feel discouragement and bend under the weight of despair. It is necessary that the Porto Rican people should defend themselves with a Spartan resolution against injustice. By submitting oneself it is not possible to reach a bright future. We must yet rally the remnants of our confidence, the last stitch of our faith; but before all we must resist with patriotic fortitude. We are small, but we shall be great; we are weak, but we shall be strong; if we unite shoulder to shoulder in this up-hill Calvary through which we go. Union will save us, and for that purpose and in order to save ourselves, the union of Porto Rico was formed, which stretches out around and opens her doors to all Porto Ricans.

I am talking politics, gentlemen; I wish, and I have a right, to speak politics. I am a member of a legislative body in which the people of Porto Rico placed its faith, and in which we are working with our faculties and with our decisions. We occupy a position in which politics is in its own domain, although we may be told that the function of this chamber is purely legislative. The cry of the people will be heard here in a more resounding manner. Let it be heard near and afar, gentleman; let it be known everywhere that the sons of this country, although compelled to suffer, at least know how to protest with dignity.

I now come, gentlemen, to the study of local political affairs, not so high but not less important than national politics. And all at once I stumble on the executive council. This is the greatest obstacle and, without any doubt, is the supreme hindrance to our insular aspirations. It is next to us and, by misfortune, is above us. There are bills here in our desks which are wise and practical. But, ah, gentlemen,

these bills will never crystallize, they will never be presented to the House, because we know beforehand that it would be useless to develop them, to present them, to defend them, and to put them through in this house. They will then go to the other house, and there they will find the "requiescat in pace." We passed a hundred bills last year. This year there are already a hundred read by the clerk, and they will amount to 200 in the course of this legislature. Twelve or sixteen at the most will become law. This is the limit fixed by the executive council.

And do you know where all the work of the Porto Rican delegates can be found? You will find it in the wastebasket of the executive council. All this we must endure, and we have only the right to express our complaint, our indignation, in the face of such absurdity. Only one legitimate representation of the people there exists in Porto Rico, and this is the house of delegates. The house is a concentration, a condensation, of the will of the people. The house is the only one that has a right to speak and to vote for the country. The executive council is but a beaurocratic body; its members are the employees of President Roosevelt, imposed upon us without being heard by the organic act enacted for us by the Congress of the United States. In every country the lawmakers are the natives of the nation, or of the colony for which they enact laws. In Ireland, which is oppressed as we are, it is the Irish who make their laws; in Canada, more free than we are, it is the Canadians; in Budapest, under the despotic rule of Austria, it is the Hungarians who form the Hungarian Diet. In Porto Rico the members of the Porto Rican senate are Americans, and we are given the laws of Montana, of California.

The honor of establishing such a liberal and wise system belongs, gentlemen, to the American people, to the more democratic people and the more just people ever known in the annals of history. Now, a fact that has been often repeated, members of the executive council arrive here who, with astonishing lack of apprehension, legislate within twenty-four hours after their arrival for the people of Porto Rico without any knowledge of our language, without having looked at our laws, without having studied the wants and the customs of the country. In speaking of the members of the council I refer to the present as well as to the past ones. Both are the most ardent proclaimers of our meager preparation for self-government. And it becomes necessary to answer such a propaganda, not in the shadow of private and confidential reports, but in plain light and in a parliamentary session. It is necessary to prove in this legislative assembly that some are not prepared, but that such are not the natives of our country, nor their representatives. Please, gentlemen, lend me your attention. There are yet remaining thirty Republican independencies of the department of charities, health, and corrections, which is presided over by insular statesmen. The chief of the department had full authority to dismiss them before the 31st of December and appoint others in their places. He did not dismiss them, because their chief did not choose to stain by an abuse the law of civil service voted by both houses, and there are the thirty Republicans under a Unionist chief. Meanwhile, other chiefs of departments, other American chiefs, took advantage of the last moments of the expiring of the old law to arbitrarily dismiss employees.

And we are not prepared. It is only that we have respect for our own resolutions, while others have no respect for their own. They are the dominant ones; they fix the rule, and that rule is always favorable to them. They always have the favorable and we the unfavorable side of the question. And in this way things are going. But if in going

in such a way, I can tell those gentlemen of the other House that they want that it is convenient for them to learn the lessons, the eloquent lessons of our local patriotists. There in the office of the consolidated departments a venerable Porto Rican, a man without a blot in his conduct, full of prestige on account of his great intellect and his prudence, competent and energetic, if there ever was one, is constantly working.

If that gentleman had dismissed many of his employees forty-eight hours before the civil-service law went in force, we would have heard a clamor and the commentaries of all the other gentlemen chiefs, affirming that Mr. Acuna was not prepared for the exercise of self-government. There is a gentleman now in the executive council whom I have not the pleasure to be acquainted with. It is reported that he is a great authority in pedagogy. It is affirmed that he devoted his whole life to public teaching, and in fact that he is a real instructor. And I have here before me, gentlemen, the programme for the examination of the rural teachers in Porto Rico. They are given out in English, without any Spanish translation, and it is asked that the teacher should answer on anatomy and physiology such questions as the following ones:

"Name of the principal organs of the human body and description of their functions.

"Which are veins, arteries, capillary. Which arteries have valves.

"Express opinion about tissues. Principal tissues of the human body.

"Describe the composition of the bones. Use of the same.

"Describe the nervous system. Discuss the influence of stimulants and narcotics."

Messrs. Delegates, these are very useful points of human knowledge. But the programmes ought to have been given to the candidates in Spanish. How can we ask a professor with $30 per month that he could be conversant with a foreign language and that without previous advice he should pass an examination on elemental physiology and anatomy? I am quite sure that the members of this house, excepting those who by their technical studies know thoroughly the scientific points, could not pass an examination; they could not become rural teachers with $30 per month.

I for one confess, my friends, that I could not, right now and without any preparation, take the risk of such a programme as this I am presenting to you, in which I see questions on hygiene, history, arithmetic, geography, and the Spanish language. [Laughter and applause through the house and the galleries.]

We now come to the great injustice, to a monstrous injustice. We have here in Porto Rico a department genuinely insular, and six other departments genuinely continental; a clerk, a director of sections, an employee whatsoever if he is an American, has a higher salary than the clerk, than the director, than the same employee with the identical work if he is a Porto Rican.

So that, in this also, the native inferiority is apparent as compared with the exotic superiority. And there is no such inferiority; such a superiority does not exist. The employees from here are as capable as the employees from abroad. And this obtains for the last ten years. I do admit that Americans may come to our office, although I think that they ought to be natives. What I do not admit is that Americans should have the higher salaries. This is unfair, it is abusive and offensive, Messrs. Delegates. I have the honor to be the chairman of the committee on ways and means; I here express frankly my opinion, which is not offhand, as the words of my speech are, but is the result of reflection and meditation. And I here tell you that I will take to the committee on ways and means this criterion which I now express

before the house. [Applause.] I accept the cooperation, but not the superiority. I enthusiastically approve of the Americans building our system of roads with our money, but for the benefit of the island; I enthusiastically approve of the maintenance of our schools, with the enormous appropriations voted by this house, and for the progress of the country. In these two points they really carry out a good work, in which some deficiencies may be found, but which in the end are fruitful. I pay to them my tribute of sympathy, and I encourage them to go on.

But this house is not going to permit for a day longer that anybody should try to raise himself above us. There, in the North, it is very well for them to think themselves superior to the rest of the world; in fact, they are so. They give to humanity a gigantic impulse; they improve methods, they broaden ideas, they realize the progress, which nobody denies or tries to discuss, a progress for which they get recognition and for which they are glorified. No Porto Rican ever went, he will never go, and will never be permitted to go to dispute the supremacy in politics or administration to Wisconsin, Rhode Island, or Massachusetts. Here in our own country we do not permit anybody to stand above us. [Prolonged applause.] And the Americans themselves, if they are real Americans, after the fashion of Washington and Jefferson, will understand the attitude, which is not the result of pride or vanity, but which is the natural impulse of the heart and the serious promptings of reason.

The Porto Rican government ignores the opinion of the Porto Rican people, and ignores it not unconsciously, but in a deliberate and systematic manner. The affairs of the country are acted upon after consultation with some private friends, and not with a political organization. And thus during the American régime the same clique (camarilla) which worked in the Spanish time has been formed. Against that clique I always stood; against this new clique I stand to-day. In this country of ours there is a Republican party and a Unionist party. They are the only representatives of the 1,000,000 human beings inhabiting our cities and our country districts.

Now, gentlemen, the government ignores both of these factors, and only lends an ear to eight or ten favorites (they are no more than ten) which sometimes emerge from half obscurity. Nobody knows who they are, what they have accomplished, what is their meaning, or what they advise. And it is necessary to speak out very clearly; those men do not represent anything; they are nobody; their advice does not mean anything in the problems of our forgotten island and the problems of this poor island symbolically represented by a lamb.

It is for this reason, gentlemen, that I said before that the greatest error of the government consists in ignoring the organized factors of this community, factors that are organized not to oppose that government, but to help it if it goes on the right path and correctly. Porto Rico has a million inhabitants, five hundred thousand of which are males. Amongst those five hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty thousand voted at the polls from the one hundred and seventy thousand who had the right to do it at the last election of 1906, and I would like, gentlemen, to see also the Porto Rican women having a vote in our country. Out of this one hundred and fifty thousand one hundred and two thousand belonged to the Unionist party and fifty-one thousand to the Republican party. The government having at hand this powerful nucleus of public opinion, ignores it and slights it.

I wish that at this present moment a Republican minority would be occupying those seats. I would then appeal to the loyalty and sincerity

of that minority, asking of them to declare clearly if my affirmations are not true. When my cordial opponents had the majority in this house, when they sent their representation to Washington, when they said they were in power they were no power at all. They were entirely ignored, as we were ignored; everything that represented here an active force was ignored; the country itself was ignored. I am a member of the central directing committee of the party of which I am proud to form a part. Many times did I discuss within that honorable committee this important question. Many times I visited the executive mansion, and I presented these problems to the governors of the island. Sometimes I left that palace with the conviction that the demand of the country was to be listened to. But afterwards I was convinced of the absolute incompatibility which existed, and that we should never reach a point of mutual transactions without very strenuous efforts. The Union party of Porto Rico made great sacrifices to come to a compromise with the government. The central directing committee maneuvered with dignified ability and encomiums and with tact to avoid a rupture. And it yet continues to work in that direction. It has continued to do so as long as the common dignity and decorum will permit it. I initiated and defended for two years such policies; I defended them in my speeches in the legislature in 1907; I yet stand for them. I believe that we should go with the government, with those governments which deserve it. We wish to be sincerely with the government, working to come to an understanding with established power; not with those governments if it is necessary to be unconditionally servile.

We can yield a good deal if a good deal is granted to us; we must be in a reciprocal attitude. In a word, we ought to pay the Government in the same coin that the Government pays us. [Applause.] I am of the opinion, and I advise, to place the independence of the insular house face to face with the independence of the insular government. We are not going systematically to oppose just as Michaevelicy and quietly we are combated. We are not going to refuse or to defeat the good laws of the executive council, as we are not going to approve or vote down the bad laws coming from that body. Our attitude is noble, but firm. We are not here to serve a power that maltreats us, but to a people who elect us and sustain us. If that power stands in opposition to the country, we will be very sorry for him, and for us we will be sorry for Porto Rico. It is convenient for everyone concerned a harmonious tendency and good will. But it should not be asked of us that while cooperating to that harmony we should give it all, while others are not willing to give anything. We demand that the will of the people should be listened to; that within this régime mistaken and bad officials called to apply it should not go even further. We demand that in our country the prime interest shall be the interest of the country. I have already explained my opinion, gentlemen, an opinion which is personally my own and the one which I feel should be the opinion of the Union of Porto Rico.

I have not ascertained the opinion of the central directing committee. I speak from my own personal account, without involving anybody else in my declarations. If any glory or profit comes from this opinion, let them be for my party and for my country; if they develop hatred and rancors, let them be for myself alone. I calmly accept them, after the satisfaction I experience in expressing the bare facts, as I think is necessary to express them, and as they are not frequently expressed in our public life. [Prolonged applause.] This is, gentlemen, my issue and the local policy. After many bitter sacrifices, after a series of efforts to keep silence, I am convinced that such a silence is

of no avail. Would that the policy in the highest sphere should change. If this happens, I shall always stand by those who do justice, with those who are convinced that tyranny, though veiled, is always odious and intolerable. The path to right doing is broad and luminous. The path to evil is narrow and dark. It is necessary to choose between the two. By the first one the Union will willingly go; by the second, those who will prefer it will go alone.

I end, gentlemen, by explaining my meaning in what relates to our relations to the national policy. Our duty is to ask for, to claim, to demand that the political status of Porto Rico should be determined upon—either with a conditional State within the community of the other States, either with a form of a frank autonomy with a community of the other American colonies. The task will be a hard one. The demand will have to be energetic and continuous. And if at the end we lose all hope, if at the end we exhaust our last effort without being heard and without our rights being recognized, then will rise in our consciences the fifth plank of the union of Porto Rico, and we shall call for independence of the island. It will then be heard—our constant hammering on the anvil, our constant energy, until the links of our servitude are broken to pieces. [Applause stifled the voice of the orator. The whole house applauds. The people in the galleries stand on their seats, and the ovation lasts for several minutes.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

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