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REALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY

By



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Enrique Soria Beldecía

Secretary of Labor

*A paper read on December 10, 1955 to
the Ninth Convention on Social Orientation
of Puerto Rico, held at the
Hall of General Studies
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Edited by:

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COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

San Juan, P. R.

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This Ninth Convention on Social Orientation presents to public discussion, in an adequate setting, the reality and outlook of Puerto Rican emigration. The subject is one of great importance at this moment. It winds up in newspaper stories, columns, editorials and cartoons, continuously expanding and contracting itself before the public curiosity and anxiety.

Occasionally, the subject of migration gives rise to worry in the public spirit because of the hardship endured by an individual or by any group of those who have left. It also gives rise to merriment and satisfaction because of the improvement attained by others in the communities freely selected by them to establish their homes and live side by side with others.

The question demands a well-informed approach in its framing and analysis. In attempting to do so in last night's meeting and in their tasks for today and tomorrow, the organizers of this convention deserve congratulations.

I have been entrusted with the presentation, within the general subject, of the descriptive picture of Puerto Rican emigration and our Government's policies in its efforts to assist the emigrants on the very site where they set themselves as an ethnic group that requires adaptation to the new environment, so that it may discharge its responsibilities and enjoy the benefits which citizenship imposes and offers. Such a public policy includes, in some aspects of emigration, the policies developed by our Government in Puerto Rico. I shall endeavor to fulfill the commission with the liking I have taken to the general subject in my official conduct every day.

Since man got out of the cavern and started its way toward civilization—a plane of his present physical, intellectual and spiritual development—he has moved himself

continually from one point to the other on the earth. In adventurous going and coming, because of his urgency to improve, he has moved away individually, in small and large groups and even in full transmigrations, widening, firstly, his old world — Europe, Asia, and Africa — and afterwards procuring for himself a new one: the Americas. Besides turning it wider, he has made it more his own.

Juice of emigrations are all the American saps, whether they are from the North or from the South, from the mainland or from the islands. In the story of Man, each emigration has had its characteristics derived from the epoch itself and from the immigrant's environment of departure and arrival.

It is suitable to state precisely the meaning we give to the terms. We have spoken of emigration, immigration and transmigration. Every migration involves a movement of emigration and immigration. Emigration refers to the movement, temporary or permanent, of an individual or group of individuals from one country to the other. Immigration is to arrive in a country. Migration describes the movement of one individual or group of individuals from their own country to another country or from one region to another within their own country. Migrants generally return to the country or region of origin, in order to renew the same movement afterwards. Hence, the denomination of migrant workers given to those who thus move from one country to another, or from one region of the country to another, in search of work.

Emigration takes place from one country or from one region to another within the same country on the individual's or the emigrant group's own volition. When the movement is compulsory by authority action it is then deportation or exile. According to the Spanish sociologist V. Borregón, emigration constitutes a free movement based on economic reasons. This concept refers, of course, to emigration as a social phenomenon. The individual's motivation is not always of an economic nature. It was not so in the case of the most distinguished of our first emigrants to the United States: Don Juan Ponce de León, the discoverer of Florida. It has not been so with many others. But it

is really so with the thousands of Puerto Rican workers who emigrate at present to the United States.

Puerto Rico, a people in the Americas formed with the sap of emigrations, repeats nowadays the migratory movement of other peoples in the past. From January 1945 to October 1955, a total of 429,747 Puerto Ricans have moved themselves into the United States, but the number of residents proceeding from Puerto Rico, of the first and second generations, is estimated at more than 600,000.

Like other inhabitants of the earth, Puerto Ricans have learned the land, sea and air routes of the world. We find them in the most remote spots of the universe, offering us the broad cordiality of their hand. Back from a long voyage throughout the Orient, Jorge Font Saldaña told us how his ears were hit as in a collision, in New Delhi, India, by the tune of a Puerto Rican "copla" (couplet) played on the guitar by Elio Lloréns, a fine artist, son of our great poet Luis Lloréns Torres.

Antecedents

Puerto Rican emigration, which today constitutes the subject matter of this convention, has its precedents at the beginning of this century. From 1908—the year in which the compilation of reliable statistics was started—to 1946, the average number of Puerto Ricans emigrating to the United States amounted to about 4,000 per year. The great impulse developed by this emigration took place after the end of the Second World War, when commercial aviation made all its facilities available to the emigrants.

With a population representing less than half the present one (953,000 in 1899), Puerto Rico already had at the beginning of the century an excess of workers. The Hawaiian Islands, on the contrary, lacked the number of workers enough for their sugar industry. The sugar companies of Hawaii sent in 1901 a ship to the port of San Juan, with employment agents who traveled all over the Island and practically stuffed the ship with more than 1,000 Puerto Ricans. Allured by the promises of continuous work—there in Hawaii the sugar industry offers employment all the year—and by the offers of better wages, hundreds

of rural workers came down the mountains to San Juan, to board the ship bound for Hawaii.

How did our folks get along in that emigration, their relatives who stayed here knew very little. Our people knew nothing or almost nothing. Once in a while, letters were received with much delay which were stories of homesickness and bitterness. Very few of those who emigrated had the ability to write and among the relatives who remained here almost none knew how to read. Those of us who started to grow in the countries of Puerto Rico after 1900 still suffer the affliction caused by that "décima" (ten-line stanza) recited in dances and rosaries, telling of our emigrants' odyssey.

But even peoples forget with the years. Two decades later, in 1921, another ship arrived in Puerto Rico, sent by the sugar companies of Hawaii in search of more Puerto Rican workers. And in this second voyage, more than one thousand workers left also, taking with them their wives, children, brothers, sisters and relatives. Neither was it much known in Puerto Rico of the hardships endured by that second group in the different islands of the Pacific. Now and then, some of the emigrants returned to Puerto Rico with dramatic stories about the sugar plantations far away in Hawaii.

After years of constant efforts to attain their best adjustment in the Hawaiian communities, the Puerto Rican migrants in 1953 received recognition from the people and the Government of the Islands for their effective contribution to the welfare of their fellow citizens. I had the honor to represent Governor Muñoz at the ceremonies.

Hawaii is a crucible of races gathered there in a succession of emigrations, all of them because of work objectives. Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Portuguese, Spaniards, Filipinos and Puerto Ricans live there together. The group of Puerto Rican origin already exceeds 10,000 in a population of only half a million inhabitants. The common and official language is English.

There are no longer many Puerto Ricans in the sugar plantations of Hawaii. Those still there share with the

other workers the mechanized occupations that produce wages of \$10 daily. Others work at military installations of the United States Government and in private enterprises. Their children are already entering the university and assuming leadership in the civic and political organizations of the islands.

It is easy to identify the contribution made by the Puerto Ricans in summing up the characteristics presented by the Hawaiian community, in its civic action, of improvement and progress.

Puerto Ricans in California

Past the first decade of this century, Puerto Rican farm workers begin to appear in the state of California. The logical conclusion is that they came from the group which had gone to Hawaii in 1901.

In his book **Factories in the Field**, Carey McWilliams tells of a tragic event that happened in Wheatland, California, on August 3, 1913. Puerto Rican farm workers had in that event a participation of mere presence which culminated in misfortune.

The I.W.W. (**International Workers of the World**) had initiated an intensive campaign to organize the farm workers in California. The campaign began to show signs of violence. The workers had been convoked to a mass-meeting in Wheatland. Carey McWilliams says:

“Of the workers assembled, about a third came from California towns and cities; another third were ‘quasi-gypsies’ from the Sierra foothills, with ramshackle wagons and carts; the remaining third were ‘hoboes’ or their ‘California exemplars, the fruit tramps’, with many foreigners among this group, including Japanese, Hindus and Puerto Ricans.”

In 1913, Puerto Ricans were not United States citizens. They were included among the alien groups.

When the meeting was nearing its end, a district attorney, a chief of Police and several of his subalterns got

through the multitude to arrest one of the speakers. The multitude got angered. A policeman shot over their heads, violence breaking out. And McWilliams reports:

"The district attorney, a deputy sheriff and two workers, a Puerto Rican and an English boy, were killed, and many persons were immured, in the riot that followed."

The author of **Factories in the Field** says of this event: "Wheatland was not a strike, but a spontaneous revolt. It stands out as one of the significant episodes in the long and turgid history of migratory labor in California."

It is estimated that about 6,000 Puerto Ricans live at present in California.

The Emigration to Arizona

No writer in the United States has poked with a more intense shock of social anguish into the problem of the migrant farm workers in that country as Carey McWilliams has done. In another work by McWilliams, **Ill Fares the Land**, first published in 1943, we find specific references to Puerto Rican emigrants. In **Ill Fares the Land**, it is reported what happened to 1,500 Puerto Rican workers who went in 1926 to the state of Arizona accompanied by their wives and children.

The Arizona Cotton Growers Association sent a ship to San Juan, making the corresponding announcement in the Island. More than 6,000 persons crowded the pier, desirous to board the ship. The workers had been promised good wages and excellent working conditions. When they arrived in Arizona the workers discovered they had been deceived; they resisted and began to desert the camp in large groups. Less than half remained in the plantations. "They scattered themselves like clouds", McWilliams states.*

* "Under the pretext of a continuing "labor shortage", the Arizona Cotton Growers Association, in 1926, arranged with the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the Department of Interior to import 1,500 Puerto Ricans. The adventure was ill-fated from the start. On the day the first boatload sailed from San Juan, 6,000 Puerto Ricans, starving for work, clamoured about the port demanding a chance to board the ship. "Rioting followed". Most of those who sailed were negroes, "ill adapted to the new environment". In Arizona the Puerto Ricans: "could not be speeded up to the point where they could pick enough cotton to make a living. They soon became public charges". The labour scouts who had recruited these workers had grossly misrepresented conditions in Arizona. Workers were told that houses with "electric lights" were furnished, and that wages were high. When they discovered that they had been deceived, they staged a minor rebellion. Less than 50 per cent remained in the fields; the others deserted the camps and marched into Phoenix.

I do not stop to describe other precedents related with groups that went to Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and the Virgin Islands, and to other places, because I do not consider them a part of the root of the emigration whose realities, problems and outlook we study today.

In One Decade and Ten Months

I have already said that from January 1, 1945 to October 31, 1955 a total of 429,747 Puerto Ricans moved themselves to the United States, which represents nearly an annual average of 40,000. In comparing this figure with the annual average of 4,000 registered from 1908 to 1944, the movement during the first 36 years in the history of migration proves to be insignificant. Another Caribbean country presents today a migratory current to the United States that doubles our annual average for the first 38 years. I refer myself to Cuba. In 1954, 8,000 Cubans emigrated to the United States and it is anticipated that the total number this year shall amount to 14,000.

There is no discrepancy between sociologists as to the motivations of the present emigration of Puerto Ricans to the United States. The motivations are of an economic character. Puerto Rico is in process of economic development. In that process we are advancing rapidly but not at the accelerated speed that would be required in creating occupations for the number of unemployed persons accumulated in over half a century of agrarian economy.

In its expansion, the economy of the United States has surpassed, in the creation of working opportunities, all the predictions made by the experts. When Henry Wallace stated a few years ago that in its expansion the economy of the United States would go as far as to provide 60,000,000 jobs in not distant a date, he was charged with being a Utopian. The total today exceeds Mr. Wallace's estimate by five millions.

The contraction and expansion of United States economy impress their rhythm on our migratory movement be-

When the Governor called upon the cotton growers for an explanation, they suggested that the city and county adopt strict ordinances against "loitering". If this action was taken, they said "we will have no difficulty in holding the supply of unskilled labour on the ranches". By the following season, 90 per cent of the Puerto Ricans had disappeared; they had scattered like clouds. "No-one konws just where they went or what happened to them; but they were not returned to Puerto Rico". — ILL FARES THE LAND, por Carey McWilliams, Page 69 — Faber & Faber Limited, London.

cause of its motivations being essentially economic. The number of Puerto Rican migrants had raised to 69,000 in 1953; and in 1954, when the economic recess happened, it went down to 21,531. Once the recess ended, from January to August 1955 the number of our emigrants went up to 51,315.

In the migratory movement of Puerto Ricans and Cubans to the United States, our migrants have the great advantage over the Cubans that they move themselves within the boundaries of a common citizenship. All that the Puerto Rican needs to migrate to the United States is to get a travel ticket from an air line. Sometimes he may get it on credit. We have already included among our popular sayings the advertisement "Fly Now and Pay Later".

For a better description of our emigration, because of the parallelism it presents in some aspects and the contrast it offers in others, it is fitting to indicate some features of the present Cuban emigration to the United States.

Cuba has, like the other Latin American countries, no limitation in its immigration quota under the laws of the United States. Of course, the Cubans must meet requisites not required from the Puerto Ricans. For example, Cubans are required to present evidence of a bank account or a guarantee or bond given by friends or relatives to the effect that the emigrant shall not become a public burden; a health certificate; a letter of good behavior signed by the Cuban police, and a sworn statement that the emigrant has never been a member of the Communist Party.

In a dispatch sent from Havana and published in its edition of last November 13, the **New York Times** reports: "The Cubans desirous to get residential visas stand in line before the United States Embassy, as a rule, from 4:00 to 8:00 A.M., when the embassy opens its doors... Apparently, only the embassy's limitation to transact the visas rapidly is what reduces the number of emigrants."

Two Types of Emigration

Puerto Rican emigration to the United States may be divided into two groups; the first and largest one is formed by persons who, having received no offer of employment

from some employer through the Department of Labor, decide to move their residence to that country. The second group is formed by workers to whom employers in the United States offer steady occupation under conditions approved by the Puerto Rico Department of Labor. Occasionally, migrants from the second group, either because they stay in the United States at the termination of their contracts; because they receive direct offers of employment, or because they want to search for work on their own initiative, pass into the first group.

Already by 1925 the district of Harlem had acquired its **Spanish** surname. It was called **Spanish Harlem** (Harlem Hispano.) Along Lenox Avenue, **come-y-vetes** (a sort of "eat-and-go" lunch stands) were established to sell **cuchifritos** (fried pork, blood and entrails), stewed rice with chicken, **matrimonios** (a "marriage" of rice and beans) and **mixtas** (a mixture of rice, beans and beef). From my life in the Spanish Harlem at that time—I was a migrant also—I gathered the observations that led me later on to write the comedy **Esta Noche Juega el Joker**. With the emigratory movement propitiated by the migrants' need of economic improvement, by the opportunities offered by the expanding economy of the United States, and the common citizenship, it was logical that the first nuclei, and finally the large conglomerate, would center themselves in New York city. The big city sent us the first passenger ships which established fixed routes with Puerto Rico. They brought us the products we began to get from the United States through free market, at the same time carrying away our sugar. It was thus that our folks began their comings and goings. But every time the number was larger of Puerto Ricans who stayed there.

What really expedited the culmination of Puerto Rican emigration after 1945 was the conversion of airplanes used in the war into the passenger traffic, acquired by regular airlines and by companies which operated and still operate without a fixed itinerary. And as well as there came by the sea routes to the Americas—to Puerto Rico—the governors and conquerors who founded our towns, each Puerto Rican migrant became a conqueror of his well-being, undertaking, through the air routes, the great adventure of

emigration. And if in the days of the Colonization caravels and galleons sank in their route to the mainland, so did air disasters occur in our migratory voyages whose remembrance still aggrieves us: Nipe, Punta Salinas, the disaster of Good Friday and others occurring in unnamed points of the Caribbean waters and on the marshy lands of Florida.

Despite those accidents, commercial aviation proved to be so effective that it has been called "the air bridge" between Puerto Rico and New York, at first with stops at Miami city and then with detours to Chicago and to all the Middle West area.

The big migratory push had its impact on the very Puerto Rican conglomerate which up to then had encysted itself in the Spanish Harlem; it had dispersion effects throughout the whole area of Manhattan and afterwards in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. Puerto Ricans live at present in all the zones and districts of New York and the total is estimated at over half a million.

It is useful to this convention's objectives to mention some of the latest estimates concerning Puerto Ricans living at present in different cities.*

| City | Puerto Rican Population |
|--|-------------------------|
| Chicago | 20,000 |
| Philadelphia | 7,300 |
| Bridgeport, Conn. | 4,000 |
| Buffalo and other cities north of New York | 2,500 |
| Camden, Trenton, Passaic, Newark, Jersey City and other cities in New Jersey | 20,000 |
| Washington, D. C. | 600 |
| Lorain, Ohio | 3,000 |
| Youngstown, Ohio | 2,100 |
| Cleveland, Ohio | 1,000 |
| Gary, Indiana | 1,500 |
| Milwaukee, Wisconsin | 2,300 |
| Miami, Florida | 1,000 |
| Tampa, Florida | 500 |
| San Francisco | 1,000 |

* The Puerto Rican in New Jersey —His Present Status— By Isham P. Jones, Field Representative, New Jersey State Department of Education, Division Against Discrimination.

The presence of a strange ethnic group gives rise to social problems and difficulties, especially of adjustment to the new environment. It creates them to the community and to the newly arrived group.

The communities in the United States whereto the Puerto Ricans have moved and move at present faced similar difficulties in the past. The Germans, Italians, French, Irish, Polish, Armenians and others also had them. Typical problems of ethnological nature are followed by others of different character.

Lacking an industrial tradition which would furnish our emigrants the knowledge of skills necessary to supply the demand for skilled workers in highly industrialized areas, our people must start with the worst remunerated occupations. In seasons when the production demand lowers and dismissals begin, unskilled and semiskilled workers are the first ones to lose their jobs.

As in the case with many other immigrants who have arrived in the United States, the ignorance of English places the Puerto Ricans at a disadvantage to use all the means offered by the community for the citizens to improve their working and living conditions. They are at an advantage over the old immigrants who formed the large conglomerate of races that today are the United States because when they arrive there they already enjoy the same citizenship of the residents. This fact saves them problems and sufferings of different nature which Germans, Italians, Dutch, Polish. . . had to endure in the past. Like the thousands of fellow-citizens who move there every year from one state to the other, Puerto Ricans move themselves within the propitious boundaries of common citizenship. It is their ignorance of the English language what makes them appear as outsiders, principally. Outsiders are also, until they acquire local residence, their fellow citizens from other States. From Puerto Rico proper to the frontier with Canada, the Puerto Rican moves himself within the ambit of common citizenship which United States territory is to him.

The discrimination based on ethnological, religious and other reasons, although accentuated in some areas and hardly perceptible in others, is a social problem as old in

the United States as the struggle that took place between the Indians and the European conquerors. *

Aside from all problems relative to labor and to all minority groups, the two which have been dramatized more with respect to Puerto Ricans are the scarcity of adequate housing and the ignorance of the English language. As for the first one, it is universally acknowledged that the solution to the housing problem concerns to the very communities, although the presence of the newly arrived immigrant accentuates it and makes it worse.

It is pretended to place the responsibility for the ignorance of the English language, because of a mere superficial and frivolous reaction, and without going into the core of the very problem, on the educational system in force in Puerto Rico. When the present system of teaching English was introduced in Puerto Rico, the vast majority of the 600,000 Puerto Ricans who live today in the United States were already out of our schools. I leave this matter purposely to be discussed farther on, when I finish the summary of the present Government's public policy on Puerto Rican emigration.

The Public Policy

Legislation was passed in 1919 vesting authority on the Department of Agriculture and Labor to approve the conditions under which Puerto Rican workers were to be hired for employment in the United States or other countries. The law was amended in 1936, mainly to transfer the responsibility of its application to the Department of Labor, established in 1931, but limiting its action, as well as in 1919, to the contracting of workers to be taken outside of Puerto Rico. No policy was established with respect to the group of emigrants who moved into the United States without an offer of contract from any employer or employer's agent right here in Puerto Rico.

In 1946 and 1947 there were contracted for, through employment agencies, 500 girls to work at homes in Chicago and 430 agricultural workers for farms in New Jersey.

* See *America Divided - Minority Groups Relation in the United States*, by Arnold and Caroline Rose. (1933, Alfred A. Knopf)

Many complaints came out. They were investigated, and the need to amend the legislation in force was made evident, in order to regulate the contracting of workers and the operation of employment agencies.

The New York daily press started in the Autumn of 1947 a campaign against the Puerto Ricans who went to settle down in that city. The Government of Puerto Rico entrusted the University of Columbia with a survey and the Department of Labor with an investigation. Both the survey and the investigation served as a basis to fix the Government's public policy with respect to emigration. In its **Statement of Motives**, Act No. 25 of December 5, 1947 provides:

"The public policy of the Government of Puerto Rico, as regards promoting the welfare of workmen through lucrative employment, and as regards the migration of Puerto Ricans to continental United States and other countries for the purpose of securing employment, is as hereinbelow set forth:

"(a) The Government of Puerto Rico neither encourages nor discourages the migration of Puerto Rican workmen to the United States or any foreign country; but it considers its duty to be, in the case of any workman or groups of workmen who wish to move to continental United States or to other countries, for the purpose of securing lucrative employment, to provide the proper guidance with respect to opportunities for employment and the problems of adjustment usually encountered in environments which are ethnologically alien; and it is likewise its duty, through such guidance of Puerto Rican workmen who migrate to the United States and other countries, to endeavor to reduce to a minimum the natural problems of adjustment arising out of any migratory movement of this nature.

"(b) The Government of Puerto Rico has not encouraged nor discouraged in the past, nor will it encourage or discourage in the future, the migration of Puerto Rican workmen to the City of New York and other areas. Puerto Ricans have heretofore been migrating freely to the city of New York and from that

city to Puerto Rico, as they have the right to do as citizens of the United States. Thousands of Puerto Ricans have been contributing and still contribute effectively, by their work and their civic participation in the life of that community, to the social and economic welfare of the city of New York. Their contribution has become notable in several industries and in various fields of human activity. It is cause for deep and legitimate satisfaction to the Government and to the people of Puerto Rico to give this fact proper recognition. However, due to the continuous increase in the migration of Puerto Rican workmen to the aforesaid city, there arise problems of adjustment which have already had a precedent in the case of other groups ethnologically different from the native population of New York, which in the past immigrated by the hundreds of thousands to the said city and to all other areas of the United States. Because it recognizes the existence of these problems of adjustment, the Government of Puerto Rico deems it its duty to cooperate with Puerto Ricans who freely select the city of New York as their place for work or residence; to cooperate with the governmental agencies of the city, the state and the United States, and its private institutions there which show an interest in and make sincere efforts to solve and minimize the said problems of adjustment. This cooperation must be given in mutual accord with the aforesaid agencies and institutions, but without invading their jurisdiction by doing directly the tasks of such agencies. The efforts of the Government of Puerto Rico in this connection should constitute a liaison at all times and under all circumstances between the Puerto Ricans who are going to reside in the city of New York and other cities of the United States, and the governments of such cities, states, and the United States.

“(c) The task of guidance and direction which is incumbent upon the Government of Puerto Rico to perform concerning the migration of Puerto Rican workmen must be circumscribed by the following basic principles: (1) The Government will undertake every task of education, improvement and guidance so that industry,

farming and commerce in Puerto Rico may at all times retain the necessary personnel for the maximum development of our production; (2) Puerto Rican workmen who wish to migrate will be guided so that they will go only to those places where a real demand for labor exists, and where their presence will not contribute to any depression of prevailing wages or to any disruption of prevailing working conditions; (3) Wherever Puerto Rican workmen go they are to earn the prevailing wages and have the same conditions as the native or resident workmen of those places; (4) It is the duty of the Government of Puerto Rico in the case of Puerto Rican workmen who wish to migrate to the United States or other countries, to instruct them adequately, before they leave the Island, concerning their responsibilities to industry and organized labor.

“(d) The public policy of the Government of Puerto Rico hereinabove set forth shall be enforced by the Commissioner of Labor of Puerto Rico.” (At present, the Secretary of Labor.)

On the basis of this law and the public policy it expounds, the Puerto Rico Department of Labor establishes an office in New York City; it opens afterwards another one for the Middle West, in Chicago, and both are later on reorganized to form the Migration Division of the Bureau of Employment and Migration. Norms had already been established by the United States and Puerto Rico Departments of Labor declaring that the Puerto Rican workers were a part of the United States labor force and should have priority in their right to employment over any group of foreign workers.

The group of workers contracted for to work in farms in Northwestern United States, which in 1946 was of only 430, has increased continuously. This group is composed today of more than 12,000 workers, besides six or seven thousand who move themselves on their own initiative, that is to say, without employers in the United States making them employment offers through the Department of Labor. To these, around six thousand others must be added who have joined the group of migrant workers of the United

States which move itself from South to North and from North to South, along the Eastern coast, following the rotation of crops.

A norm of public policy, established by virtue of the authority vested by law on the Secretary of Labor of Puerto Rico to approve the conditions under which workers are contracted for here to be employed in the United States, is the one providing that no contract shall be approved for areas where racial segregation and other discriminations of this sort are authorized by law. On the other hand, emigration being a completely free movement and being the Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States, none of our citizens may be forbidden to move himself, on his own volition, to the area in the United States freely selected by him to work and to make his home.

The service which the Government of Puerto Rico offers, under the established policy, to Puerto Rican migrants have been expanding since 1948.

The Government of Puerto Rico established with these services a precedent in the history of immigration in the United States, and possibly in the history of immigration in the whole world. I know not of a similar case. That precedent consists of its having gone, with its own economic resources and at an official level, to the communities freely selected by our emigrants to work and to reside, in order to cooperate with the governments of those communities and with the very immigrants in reducing to a minimum the problems of adjustment to the new environment of the newly arrived. Of course, that step is taken without assuming the authority and the responsibility which correspond solely to the local government in facing the problems under their own laws and jurisdiction. Our offices in the United States, established with the purposes mentioned herein and with the consent of the local governments serve as contact and liaison agents between the Puerto Rico migrants and the communities, through the private and public agencies already established in those communities.

Even within the United States proper, thousands of residents from one state move and center themselves in

cities of other states, without the government of the state wherefrom they come extending them its action of assistance or of any other nature. Thousands of workers from the Southern states have moved themselves in late years to the cities of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

I leave it to Mr. José Monserrat, Director of the New York Office and who will also present a report at this convention, to explain in detail how the said services operate.

The Puerto Rican Migrant's Contribution

The best contribution our migrants can make to the communities in the United States is that of their own culture. (With the cultural contribution of millions of immigrants from all parts of the world, the culture of the people of the United States has been formed.) This judgment is maintained by sociologists and civic leaders of different communities who are in contact with the Puerto Ricans. It is shared by persons like the former Commissioner of Labor of New York, Mr. Edward Corsi, and the present Mayor Robert F. Wagner.

To point at the suitability and urgent necessity of having our migrants learn English and help them to learn it quickly—especially the English spoken in the farms, the workshops, in factories, in citizens' meetings where common problems are discussed—does not mean they are required to cease being themselves, as the individuals or the collective person they are. In addition to what the English language represents to the citizen who lives in an English speaking country, and in what the language has to do as an instrument of work, its knowledge is necessary to make the cultural contribution to the communities and to accept the cultural and spiritual assets prevalent in the environment. This adjustment to the environment is to exist side by side with others. But to exist side by side with others is not to dissolve oneself. To exist side by side with others is to live with others but being oneself. That occurs, and it is necessary that it happen, in the first generation of every immigrant group. It repeats itself in part in the second generation. From the second generation onward, as a consequence of the process of natural adaptation followed by the immigrant within the environment, he be-

comes a part of the whole community in such a way that the characteristics of his ethnic origin turn out to be almost imperceptible.

For a better understanding of the concepts referred to before it is fitting to indicate that the term "to exist side by side with others" applied to the first generation turns into assimilation as refers to the second epoch and into integration as to those following it.

It is a reality that the greatest problem faced by Puerto Ricans when they move themselves to the United States is their ignorance of the English language. That reality must be observed and, if possible, reconciled with other realities of our people. As long as our children give up their school at any of the elementary grades, they shall do so without a good grasp of the English language. Later on, in adult life, although they may reside in the United States, that shall be difficult to them. Our children are learning English at present and they are learning it satisfactorily, but the members of the labor force who are out of school in Puerto Rico or in the United States do not know enough English because of having left the school untimely. That is a reality confronted by the migrant already in the United States or by the potential migrant who is still in Puerto Rico.

Up to the time when this emigration was started in large numbers, at an average of 40,000 per year during the last 10 years, the teaching of English in Puerto Rico was given a purely political connotation. It was desired to teach English to children who knew nothing - neither English nor any other subject in the curriculum-in trying to teach them everything in English. The mentors concluded that it was a mistake. It was a double mistake: a pedagogical and political mistake. The pedagogical mistake was corrected and English is now taught and it is learned now at our schools. I saw and heard several of the Congressmen who visited us recently speaking in English to young workers and in factories and workshops of Puerto Rico. I am certain that they also talked English to children at the public schools, and the children understood the Congressmen and the Congressmen understood the children. But there are still some politicians who wish to persist on the mistake of not

teaching English because of their pretention to teach everything in English. It is not enough to introduce a good teaching system for the learning of English or of any other subject. It is necessary to develop a good program for the learning of English. He will learn English who knows and feels the need to learn it. The reality of that necessity with the student, minor or adult, will be more vivid and clearer to the extent it is freed psychologically from the absurd political connotations given in the past, and still pretended to be given at present, to the teaching of English to our people. He who does not know his own language will hardly learn other's. In Holland, in order to learn English, French and German, the Dutch people learn their own language well. This was explained to me by a worker at a factory in Amsterdam, when I noticed three newspapers inside his lunch basket, one edited in English, another in German and the other one in Dutch. "I can read and talk French also", he said. "I learned those languages besides my own one because England is over there, on the other side of the Channel; to Germany, I go up along the banks of the Rhine, and in France there is not much people; at least there is not as much as here in Holland . . ." The wisest teaching method may fail in the presence of the negative psychology that complexes foreign to education, especially the political complexes, may have created in the student, minor or adult. It is learned what it is desired to be learned, not what it is wanted to be taught.

So as to be able to work and advance like all his other fellow citizens in the United States, the Puerto Rican migrant must know English, he must learn it, and the quicker he learns it the more marked the development of his own welfare shall be. In order to make his cultural contribution to the community wherein he lives, which is what the communities receiving him expect of him, he must necessarily know English. But in order to be able to contribute his own cultural stock, he must possess that cultural stock: being himself, emphasizing at the bottom of his spirit the culture of his own people, which can reach his soul only in his mother tongue. In order to learn English and to continue being the person or the legitimate expression of the collective person his people is, the Puerto Rican must know the Spanish language.

To Spanish, English must be added. I have seen many Puerto Rican migrants in the United States learning English with their fellow citizens there who wish to learn Spanish through their living together with ours.

At high schools in New York, the largest contingent of students who learn foreign languages are those enrolled in the classes of Spanish. At present the total is 69,628 students. I know residents of New York who, not having left out to live in a Spanish speaking country, have learned Spanish living together with our folks.

This great reality that Puerto Rican migrants must learn English, and learn it here in Puerto Rico if that is possible before moving themselves to the United States, begins to have a general acknowledgement among the adults proper.

In the English classes for adults in Puerto Rico, 1,845 persons were enrolled in 1953-1954; in 1954-1955 there were 5,714 enrolled, and for 1955-1956, a registration of 10,000 is anticipated.

Before the realities, problems and outlook presented by the emigration of Puerto Ricans to the United States, it is logical that we expand the services we offer to Puerto Rican immigrants at the very communities they have chosen to establish their homes; and to give them, to the extent it may be possible, the proper assistance here in Puerto Rico, when they are mere potential migrants.

We must continue offering our help to the emigrants within the radius presented by the problems of emigration. The service of that assistance can and must be bettered according to the experience being gained every day. The problems and perspectives of emigration must be kept within the proper orbit of its dimensions, as well as its realities. A frivolous approach to these problems and perspectives would be dangerous to a people like ours, which can not lose a single minute in its mission to create for itself the economic means to enable it to live in harmony with the great assets of its culture and its spirit. On the contrary, the realities of emigration proper must serve us as a noble stimulus to rededicate ourselves, with all the forces of our

souls, to the basic objectives that serve as a goal for our people.

There is among those objectives the one of giving to every man and every woman, right here, the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of civilization at their legitimate material and spiritual levels. To pretend to deviate our people from those objectives of its own being, in order to promote, give impulse to and accelerate emigration still more, would be absurd and nonsensical.

No people can exist fixing itself a goal of dissolution. We do not make our people ready to emigrate to other lands. We prepare it to stay here, on the island that God bestowed upon it and which it loves with so deep a devotion.

Puerto Rico neither encourages nor discourages migration. It respects the individual's right of liberty to emigrate and endeavors to assist him in the solution of his problems.

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