

REMARKS BY THE GOVERNOR
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
HONORABLE RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
AT THE PRE-CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON TO BENEFIT
THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE HUGO

9 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 1989

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Although time passes us by swiftly, memories, specially sad memories, remain strongly linger in our hearts and minds. That is the case with Hurricane Hugo. Almost two months after it struck our island, Hurricane Hugo is still a painful memory to many Puerto Ricans.

Our government has estimated that Hurricane Hugo has caused \$1.1 billion in damages that have been particularly severe in the northern and eastern parts of the Island of Puerto Rico. The efforts to provide volunteers, resources and financial donations have considerably helped more than thousands of families who have lost property and homes.

I am grateful to Congressman Charles Rangel, who lobbied vigorously for federal assistance for Puerto Rico. I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the Puerto Rican and Latino elected officials who cooperated with the Secretary and staff of the Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, to coordinate emergency relief aid for the island's victims. With the assistance of the Governor of

the State of New York, Mario M. Cuomo, and the Mayor of New York City, Edward I. Koch, New York's Puerto Rican community mobilized the most commendable effort to provide necessary technical equipment and assistance to clear roads, transport emergency materials and help restore electrical and water services to the Island.

But cleanup is not reconstruction and what Puerto Rico faces is a long-term effort to rebuild housing, infrastructure, and economy.

Today's event will focus much needed and sustained attention on Puerto Rico's relief needs and the funds raised will significantly demonstrate the concern of all those involved for the people of Puerto Rico.

I wish to thank First Boston, Radio City Music Hall, Campbells Soup, Coca-Cola, Hot 97 Radio Station and the Daily News for their generous contributions to the Puerto Rican Relief Fund. On behalf of the people of Puerto Rico, I specially wish to thank the Daily News for its fine coverage

of the events following Hurricane Hugo and for honoring me with its Front Page Award.

Today's event also marks the importance of the Puerto Rican community in New York. First for being the backbone of all the Hurricane Hugo relief efforts: I believe that the expression and concern for the loved ones and relatives on the Island spurred on much of the assistance that Puerto Rico received. Second, as November has been designated Puerto Rican Heritage Month, it commemorates our achievements, contributions and rich culture. And third, for turning out in large numbers during the Tuesday's Mayoral Elections. It is evident that the Puerto Rican vote made the difference, not only in determining the outcome of the election, but in providing our community with the political clout to advocate for improvements in the quality of life. These children here today, proudly waving the Puerto Rican Flag are the future. It is for them that Puerto Ricans must commit themselves to insure that political participation and representation is

part of the tradition that is passed on. As was seen on Tuesday, and in many elections to come, the sleeping giant the is the Puerto Rican vote, is awakening. I congratulate the Puerto Rican and Latino voters.

Again, I thank all of you here today. Your support and commitment to contribute to the reconstruction efforts in Puerto Rico will help restore our island, but more importantly, to uplift our spirit and vitality.

As we move towards the holiday season there is no greater gift than to receive the proceeds of the Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular, that will undoubtedly make our holidays better. I hope that in keeping with the Christmas spirit of giving others will follow your example and give to the Puerto Rican Relief Fund.

* * * * *