



**REMARKS OF THE GOVERNOR
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
HON. RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
THIRTY EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO**

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WASHINGTON D.C.

On July 25 Puerto Rico will celebrate its 38th anniversary as a self-governing, autonomous Commonwealth of the United States. The intervening years have been dramatic and fruitful -- fruitful for the United States as well as for Puerto Rico.

The creation and success of the Commonwealth was a particularly felicitous act of American and Puerto Rican statesmanship in the post-war world, an unique experiment in the relations of a great world power and a small, disadvantaged island. There was no certainty that it would succeed. But good will and wisdom on both sides laid the ground work. Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1952 triggered an explosion of energy and creativity in Puerto Rico, led by Governor Luis Muñoz Marin. This in turn led to a soaring economy and a society in which social equality and well-being rose apace with per capita income. The figures themselves are dramatic: Puerto Rico's per capita income was \$121 yearly before the war; today it is approximately \$6,000.

Puerto Rico's success as a Commonwealth is also the United States' success. The Commonwealth

and its fruitful relations with the U.S. are admired around the world, conferring great credit on the United States. Puerto Rico is also pulling its weight in the international arena, where it is supporting and amplifying American efforts in the Caribbean Basin. Our twin-plan program has already led to creation of 82 complementary or "twin" industrial production between plants based in Puerto Rico and new plants in 12 Caribbean Basin countries, including in Central America. These have already created 15,000 badly-needed jobs with an investment of \$411 million of which \$322 have been financed with ELA-936 funds.

It comes as a surprise to many persons to learn that Puerto Rico, as a Commonwealth, has also become a major market for U.S. products. In 1989, the 3.3 million Puerto Ricans bought \$9.4 billion in American goods, more than the combined purchases of Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Colombia, which have an aggregate population of 232 million. Moreover, Puerto Rico's purchases from the U.S.

generate about 150,000 direct and indirect jobs in the United States.

Economically and internationally, the Commonwealth is proving its importance to the United States.

For reasons that most serious economists understand, Puerto Rico's dramatic economic growth would not have been possible under any political status other than Commonwealth. The special fiscal relationship of the Commonwealth and the United States could not be duplicated under any other tie. And without this special relationship, it would not have been possible to have created an industrial sector of some 2,000 plants, which are the motor and backbone of our economy.

Thirty-eight years is not a long time in world history. But it has been long enough for both the United States and Puerto Rico to prove the efficacy and extraordinary productivity of the Commonwealth in its autonomous, self-governing relationship with the United States.

I am confident that is only the beginning, and that we will see even greater future contributions by the Commonwealth in our very fruitful partnership.

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