



WELCOMING ADDRESS OF  
HONORABLE RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON  
GOVERNOR  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

Before the First General Session of the 1973 Annual Congress of Cities

December 3, 1973.  
Roberto Clemente Coliseum  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Thank you Mayo Gribbs.

Members of the Executive Committee, distinguished mayors, city officials and guests.

It is with great pride that I welcome the 1973 Annual Congress of Cities to Borinquen, our beautiful Island of Puerto Rico, and to our capital city, San Juan, so rich in charm and tradition.

I know that you will find here an ideal setting for working on the many critical urban problems which all of you face in governing America's cities.

And for your leisure moments I am sure that your host mayor, the Honorable Carlos Romero Barceló, has arranged an exciting and rewarding schedule of events.

We have also planned an activity for you. I should like to take this opportunity to invite you to attend a musical concert this evening. It will be held at 8:00 P. M. at the Sr. Christopher Fortress in Old San Juan. I hope that all of you will be able to attend.

The theme of your conference--"City Policies to Meet People Needs"--is relevant and challenging.

It is also curiously symptomatic of our modern age.

The politician of simpler times past would have had no need for a conference dedicated to the identification and analysis of the desires and troubles of his constituency. He was constantly kept informed by the steady

stream of people problems passing daily through his office -- not in the form of memoranda and position papers, but in the form of actual people with actual problems.

The tremendous growth of government in recent decades, responding to rapid increases and shifts in population, industrial and economic development, technological sophistication, growing demands and needs of citizens for services, and a multitude of other factors, has denied us that intimate contact with the people we serve.

We spend our time as managers of vast, complex, and typically impersonal bureaucracies.

Thus we can understand the movement back towards the earlier style of government, when few politicians felt unsure about the wants and needs of their constituents.

This philosophical shift is expressing itself in a variety of ways.

It is the conceptual foundation of the so-called New Federalism, where-by federal programs are restructured to shift power and responsibility back to the levels of government closest to the people.

It is the heart of the drive for more constant and direct citizen participation in government.

It is the moving force behind electoral reform efforts, at all levels of government, aimed at stripping institutions and machines of their great influence on the electoral process, and returning elections to the people.

And it is, quite obviously, the central concern of this 1973 Congress of Cities.

We in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico are undergoing a similar reexamination of our governmental systems.

We are confident that the steps we are taking to achieve these goals will result in a more balanced governmental system, combining the rationality and efficiency of central systems with the responsiveness and humaneness of local institutions, to better serve our citizens.

I wish you luck and success in your conferences and workshops as you grapple with these concerns and with the multitude of urban problems which you face.

Even if you only achieve some modest success in what you have ambitiously set out to do -- to define what is meant by the "quality of urban life" and to devise the means to attain that life -- this 1973 Annual Congress will have been worthwhile.

Thank you.