



ADDRESS OF THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR OF
PUERTO RICO, RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON,
TO THE OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB,
FEBRUARY 22, 1973.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, invited guests:

I'm very happy to be with you, the working members of the Press in Puerto Rico, on this occasion and I'm delighted to respond to your invitation to address a few words to you, because, as you can imagine, I have very strong feeling about the Press, especially in the light of some of the articles that have been coming out on me recently. Actually my relations with the Press have been pretty good, all things considered. The only problem is, I can't decide which is worse: not getting the medal Alex Maldonado thinks I should have for keeping my mouth shut, or running the risk of totally disappearing from the columns of Betsy Lopez and Mike Santina if I don't start talking.

Ladies and Gentleman, I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you my philosophy of administration and how the government with which I have been entrusted for the next four years has been realizing this philosophy since January 2.

If there is one bedrock foundation on which my administration rests and will continue to rest, it is my determination to give good government to Puerto Rico. I am convinced that good government is essential for our community at this moment in its development. Good government means....

1. Government which deals with the problems of the community prudently, responsibly and realistically.

2. It means government which has adequate and capable administrative tools for accomplishing its purpose.

3. It means government which looks ahead and plans realistically to meet and overcome problems on a long range basis.

4. It means government which tries to see the broad and underlying relationships between problems, and thus avoid the dangers of improvising responses to isolated issues.

5. Above all it means government which educates, informs and listens, fostering a continual dialogue with the community.

Education and information, to be effective bases for including people in the process of solving their shared problems and as a means for marshalling public support of government policies, are conditional on the credibility of the government, on the belief of ordinary people that the governor and his administration are telling the truth. Thus, good government in this sense is the opposite of creating a false appearance of activity—having your picture in the paper every day accompanied by a flood of rhetoric on how you are going to solve every possible problem. This approach may look good for a while but it ultimately tends to undermine the faith and belief of people in their elected officials.

In short, the government must tell the truth, because in order to function effectively. The "consent of the governed" is a phrase which applies not only to elections themselves but also to that broad public support on which the government must count for the day-by-day job of putting its policies into action. This support is not forthcoming when the people do not believe what the government in the sense of truthful government is the foundation of my political philosophy. This philosophy is and will be implemented at all levels of my administration.

For example, the Director of Fomento and I have reached an agreement to the effect that no industrial promotions will be announced by Fomento until there is tangible evidence that a factory is indeed being established. Of course, the interested parties themselves can make any announcements they please. But

since there can be a discrepancy between intention and realization or even between expressed interest and intention on the part of businesses negotiating with Fomento, we shall not be declaring as actual fact the establishment of new industries in Puerto Rico until they are indeed actual fact.

That's one example of how our determination to talk straight to the people is being realized.

Another example, and this one directly affects you, as members of the press, is my policy against speaking out on an improvised basis. I don't pretend to know all the answers and improvisation has a tendency to bring out either rhetoric or statements which have to be severely modified or even abandoned later in the hard light of reflection. In either case, the result again is a loss of confidence in the truthfulness of the government and the elected officials of the people.

Such a policy goes hand in hand with the idea of an open administration, an idea to which we have publicly committed ourselves. The people have an absolute right to know what their government is doing and why, and we're seeing to it that this right is fulfilled.

Our policy of not improvising unsustainable statements has enabled us to insure the press that all discussions will be "on the record". As you know, we have been meeting regularly on this basis with the press assigned to La Fortaleza and we will continue to do so.

Furthermore we have established a firm policy that all, and I mean all, questions submitted to La Fortaleza will receive a full reply and all information requested will be forthcoming.

In line with the same policy of an open government I have no hesitancy in allowing agency heads to speak out on matters relating to their departments. They have shared in planning policy in their area of responsibility, and they are

going to have to implement it, so it's only right to let them defend it and stand behind it publicly.

I am delighted to give members of my administration this authority, retaining for myself all announcements which it is the duty of the Governor to make. In addition, we are and will be studying ways to insure even greater access to information on the activities, policies and decisions of the government at all levels. This has to be a continual process for any administration which believes in the right to know and, ladies and gentlemen, I repeat: This is such an administration.

However, truthfulness, accessibility and openness are worthwhile only if there is something happening to tell the truth about. This is the other side of the meaning of good government which I mentioned earlier: That kind of government which achieves solid and lasting results because it acts prudently, responsibly and realistically, because it lays the proper groundwork, because it has created capable administrative structures, because it foresees and plans comprehensively, and because it perceives the inter-relatedness of problems. I am glad to say that since my inauguration our work has borne considerable fruit in all these areas.

Let's briefly review what we've been doing along these lines.

First, on the basis of an exhaustive study, we have developed a plan for the total reorganization of La Fortaleza in order to insure an efficient and streamlined framework for the productive conduct of public business. This plan is already being carried out vigorously and will soon be completed.

On the basis of previous legislation, this administrative reorganization for the purpose of enabling us to deal more effectively with the problems of Puerto Rico to the government as a whole, and this process has resulted in the organization of four new departments: Housing, Public Works, Natural Resources and the General Service Administration. I am convinced that this careful

rethinking of the governmental apparatus, both in La Fortaleza and among the agencies, will produce very satisfactory results.

We have also been concentrating on staffing the administrative positions which already existed or were created by our reorganization. This process is nearly complete. I've devoted considerable thought and effort to this job because it is my view that appointing people to conduct the public business is just about the most important thing a Governor does. The best-conceived programs are, in the end, only as good as the people who run them.

Let me say here that my criterion for the selection of people is simply that the best man or woman I can find for a job is the person who should have the job. Political considerations are frankly present in this selection process as they should be, but they are not predominant in my evaluation of possible appointees. I have and will continue to operate in this area on the principle that a political associate must still be the best man for the job; otherwise I'll look elsewhere.

On the lower levels of government, I am in the process of formulating a program to deal with the problem of entrenched bureaucracy, a problem which good government must be ever watchful for, because encrusted routine and personal insensitivity can choke any program to death. The plan that I am working on will attempt nothing less than the revitalization of the entire governmental apparatus, not through control mechanisms, authorization edicts, or the elimination of necessary programs, but by inspiring and changing the attitudes of the bureaucracy, motivating them to work together with me in a partnership to enkindle our whole society through government. This program will reach to the lowest levels of the government.

In attacking public problems of both immediate and long range concern,

I think this administration has compiled an impressive record in the short time since we took office.

For example, we have met the rising cost of living head-on by a price freeze. We have evolved a new price policy for Puerto Rico to deal with that aspect of inflation caused by a faulty distribution mechanism by creating the Import-Distribution Company for the payment of subsidies to importers. This approach is flexible in that it allows us to hold down prices for the consumer without prejudicing the interests or livelihoods of those engaged in commerce.

In other areas, we have been spending a great deal of time and attention on devising workable solutions to the housing problem, a problem which will become more acute with the projected phasing out of Federal HUD programs as proposed by President Nixon. However, with the organization of the Department of Housing, we have streamlined the governmental apparatus for dealing with this vital issue and we expect this accomplishment to produce positive results which will begin to alleviate the distress of the many people in our society who are deprived of adequate homes.

We have plunged boldly into the search for new approaches and new avenues for solving unemployment. One example of a concept we have been developing during the seven weeks since this administration took office is that of involving the municipalities and people on the local level in the planning, development and realization of public works through a matching fund program. Not only would such an innovation create local jobs, but by relying on local initiative, foster more meaningful participation by people in the decision-making process.

We are also looking ahead to fresh solutions to the unemployment problem in the context of industrial development. To this end I have accepted an

invitation extended by Governor Jim West of North Carolina to send a representative to that State for the purpose of studying their highly successful program for attracting industry.

In essence, this plan attracts factories by providing for intensive, on-site training of workers to the specific requirements of each enterprise. This is of obvious benefit to industries coming into the area. The training of workers and the establishment of industry creates a proliferation of useful and meaningful jobs as well as raising the industrial capacity of the area. We are and will continue to give this idea careful consideration.

Many of the tasks which we have been accomplishing since January 2 in order to establish good government on a permanent and comprehensive basis have focussed on a searching examination of the means whereby we achieve our governmental goals. None of these is more crucial to the welfare on this community than the means whereby we finance the government and its programs. To this end we have been formulating in recent weeks and will soon be establishing a Financial Council whose purpose will be not only to scrutinize existing sources and methods by which we pay our way, but also to look for and suggest new and creative methods of financing in order to raise programs such as education and housing, among others, to entirely new levels of service to the community.

In the area of legislation we have presented bills which have already been enacted by the legislature creating commissions which are empowered and funded to examine areas of major concern for the welfare and democracy of Puerto Rico. One will review the whole electoral process and present legislation for reform which will be considered in a special session.

Another commission will scrutinize the tax system and report periodically over the next 18 months on comprehensive reform measures which will distribute our wealth more fairly throughout the society and generate greater revenues to

fund more effective services.

The third commission has been established to devise a program of universal health insurance in order to provide adequate medical care for every member of society and to relieve those of limited resources of the crushing financial burden of medical attention. Good health is an absolute right of all people everywhere and should not be conditional on the size of one's income.

I have already appointed the latter two Commissions and the officials who will constitute the Commission on Electoral Reform will be named in the very near future.

Looking ahead to basic problems which can affect our society at every level, we have been formulating ways of dealing with such concerns as insuring an adequate energy supply for our industrial, commercial and private growth in the near future. With these needs in mind I have set up a Task Force whose purpose is to develop a twophase energy policy: the first phase will cover the next six months, and the second phase, of broader range, will concern itself with the requirements of the coming two years. This Task Force is now in full operation.

Turning our attention to matters which have to do with Puerto Rico's relations with the outside world, I have been working to set up structures which will give us a firm base for dealing with the Federal Government.

Along these lines, I have taken positive steps to strengthen the government's Washinton arm and to establish effective liaison with the Resident Commissioner and other relevant officials of our government both here and in Washington. Besides numerous informal contacts, this liaison has taken the form of an inter-governmental or continental affairs policy discussion on a monthly basis with the Resident Commissioner, the Secretary of State, the Director of the Office of Puerto Rico in Washinton and other cabinet or agency heads.

Finally we have formulated an InterCaribbean Relations policy for the purpose of establishing productivities with our neighbors. The Secretary of State and the Director of the Office of Puerto Rico in Washington are already working to set up coordination between the federal Department of State, the Puerto Rican Department of State, and the North-South Center. This policy will vigorously promote economic, cultural and relationships among the communities of the Caribbean region.

This, then, is a brief outline of what my administration has been doing since our assumption of office on the sencon day of January, 1973.

I firmly believe that our record is one of solid accomplishment in addressing the root causes of many of the problems confronting Puerto Rico rather than merely applying hasty bandages to some of the outward manifestations of these problems. We have also created the means for innovative solutions to these problems through new or streamline governmental tools.

Add to these my utter determination to foster the faith and trust and belief of the people in their government; to lay both the good and the bad on the line; to mean what I say in public declarations and be able to back them up; to speak out when there is something substantial to report or when it is necessary to exercise the educational or moral leadership required of the Governor: This in my view is the basis for good government. I submit the proposition to the judgement of the people.

Thank you.