

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
HONORABLE RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
DURING THE VISIT OF HONORABLE SENATOR
HENRY JACKSON

APRIL 17, 1974

We are indeed honored by Senator Jackson's presence. His major contributions to national security, preservation of our natural environment, sound handling of our energy resources and his effective concern for the civil rights of all his fellow citizens are well known throughout the United States and the world. In grappling with these issues of national and international consequence, Senator Jackson has found time to take a special interest in the problems besetting Puerto Rico. For this all Puerto Rico is deeply appreciative.

Perhaps no single issue illustrates Senator Jackson's effective leadership better than his personal and determinative role in our own long-standing concern with Naval training at the Island of Culebra. Culebra has come to symbolize the special difficulties Puerto Rico sometimes faces in its relationship with the Federal Government. Senator Jackson, personally, made a unique contribution towards resolving the Culebra issue consistent with his commitment to national security and yet sensitive to human values and Puerto Rico's insistence on the rights of its citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As Senator Jackson expressed it so well on August 27, 1970, "What is at stake is something more than the Navy's use of a training facility. In fact,

what is at stake is the quality of life on Culebra and the Navy's right to decide how far it can go in affecting the lives and well-being of the people who live there."

Under Senator Jackson's guiding hand, Congress enacted special legislation in 1970 directing the Secretary of Defense to study alternatives to the Navy's use of Culebra. Characteristically, Senator Jackson did not let the matter rest there. He followed up with a personal letter to the President recommending that the White House Staff and State Department monitor the Congressionally mandated study, in his words, "to take account of the political ramifications for Latin America which are involved in the long-term settlement of this problem." In October of 1970, Senator Jackson assured his fellow Senators "I intend to follow through personally."

With characteristic perseverance, Senator Jackson honored that pledge. After his legislative effort elicited a Defense Department study that conclude Culebra could be replaced. Senator Jackson took action to make sure it would be replaced. In 1971, he authored new legislation directing the Secretary of Defense "to prepare a detailed feasibility study of the most advantageous alternative" to the Culebra Complex. This legislation, in turn, laid the foundation for Secretary of Defense

Richardson's May 24, 1973 decision to transfer all Navy training operations from the Culebra Complex to the uninhabited island of Desecheo and Monito. But Secretary Richardson's decision was dependent upon Congressional authorization and appropriation of funds necessary to effect the transfer. Senator Jackson promptly introduced legislation to fund the transfer.

Single-handedly he succeeded in persuading his fellow Senators on the Armed Services Committee to add \$12 million to the Military Construction Authorization Bill for 1974 to carry out Secretary Richardson's Culebra decision. Senator Jackson recognized that the honor of the United States was in issue. Puerto Rico achieved justice through the democratic process because there was a man like Senator Henry Jackson who was willing to stand up and be counted for what is right. It is said in Washington that if Senator Jackson is on your side, you don't have to count higher than one to know the result.

The issue of Culebra appears headed towards a satisfactory and complete resolution and when the Navy guns and bombs no longer fire at Culebra, Senator Jackson more than any other man will have been responsible.

We pay tribute today to a man whose political career has honored the trust placed in him by his fellow

citizens. A well-rounded and accomplished statesman whose integrity shines as a beacon of redemption, in a system undermined by moral despair.

We are honored by his presence here today. He stands as a symbol of those values of principled pragmatism, which built America. In moments, when the United States is in distress we in Puerto Rico are particularly confident to see that America can count on men of the caliber of Henry Jackson to guide the country on to destiny.

