

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO
SERVICE OF SANITATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS
TO THE
DIRECTOR OF SANITATION

San Juan, P. R., February 2nd,

Private & Confidential.

The Honorable,

The Governor of Porto Rico,

San Juan, P. R.

Sir:-

In pursuance of a conversation which I had with you concerning the question of medical attendance upon the sick poor (beneficencia municipal), which is altogether under the control of the Municipal Authorities, I requested the three Medical Inspectors of this Service to inspect the work in all the municipalities of the Island and report to me. I have up to the present time only received reports from two of these Inspectors; but in view of the fact that you are leaving on Wednesday for the States and that on your trip the question of a change in the organization of the government will be taken up in Washington, I want to call your attention to a few of the facts stated in these reports as well as to those matters that come within my personal knowledge.

Since I have been practising medicine in this Island I have necessarily come into contact with the municipal hospitals quite often and I knew before entering into the Service of Sanitation exactly the conditions that existed in the Island in connection with the attendance upon the sick poor.

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First; the appointment of the employees, from the doctor to the lowest employee in the municipality, is absolutely a question of politics and not one of efficiency, and such appointments are made absolutely without regard to the moral character of the man in question. For instance, in the town of Caguas, there are at the present time two doctors employed by the municipality. One of these, Dr. Buitrago, is a capable man and one about whom no adverse comments can be made so far as I know. The second Dr. Victor Coll y Cuchi is a graduate of a correspondence school of medicine. Before studying medicine he was a member of the police force from which he was dismissed for immoral conduct. Afterwards he was city physician in Caguas from which position he was dismissed for conduct so absolutely immoral and bestial that I cannot mention it at this time. Of this fact the municipal authorities in Caguas are as thoroughly cognizant as I am, because the affair occurred in the city of Caguas and was talked about openly by everyone in the town. In the town of Cayey Dr. Alejandro Giol is city physician. He was employed for a while in the Service of Sanitation and was dropped because of his being absolutely worthless and also because of open, public, disgraceful immoral behavior on the streets of Quebradillas where he was stationed. In the town of Aibonito of which I have personal knowledge the city physician is a man who is not legally qualified to practise in the Island.

Second; with reference to the efficiency of this Service. Nominally medical attendance and medicines are to be furnished only to those persons who are known as "pobres insolventes", that is, persons absolutely so poor as to be unable to pay for either medical attendance or medicines. As a matter of fact, the city physician in nearly every case is required

to attend without compensation all the employees of the municipality from the Alcalde down and all of them get their medicines and medical supplies at the expense of the city government. Many of the municipalities for example, Quebradillas, Cidra, Naranjito, and Trujillo Alto are so lacking in funds that they are unable to set aside more than thirty or forty dollars a month for a doctor. As the municipal officials are the only ones living in the community who have sufficient means to pay a doctor, and as the doctor is required to attend them without compensation, these towns are not able to secure the services of a physician except as he may make weekly visits to the town. Outside of the towns of San Juan, Ponce, Mayaguez, Aguadilla, and Arecibo the proportion of physicians to the population is about one to ten thousand. In the United States the proportion is one to one thousand or less. The distances and the difficulties of travel to the interior are so great that almost without exception the poor people outside of the towns are born, live and die without receiving any medical assistance of any kind. For this we cannot blame the city physician.

Third; hospitals. The majority of the municipalities make a pretense of maintaining a hospital. The hospital in San Juan and I believe the assistance of the city physicians in San Juan is efficient and so well managed as to be a credit to the municipality. The hospital at Ponce has improved very much in the last two years. The physician in charge, however is a young man, very capable for his age and experience, but who has never had the training nor the experience necessary to qualify him to properly manage such an institution. With the amount expended in this hospital and the number of employees if properly managed under trained supervision a

number one hospital could be maintained; but no improvement is to be expected under the present system.

A year ago a census was made of the sick in the hospitals of the Island. There were at that time 513 reported of sick in hospital. Out of this number about 50% were chronic diseases that should not have been in the hospital. This besides increasing the expense has the effect of depriving of medical attendance the acutely sick who are entitled to it.

In nearly all of the smaller hospitals the report is made of person who are fed from the hospital kitchen, but are not in any way entitled to. For instance in Santa Isabel two children of the cook; in Rio Piedra the statement is made of ten or twelve people; in Guayama it is stated that what is left over is given out to poor neighbors; in Arroyo it is stated that the families of the employees live outside but eat in the hospital; Maunabo the families of the employees. In this hospital last year was a young woman without any disease who had been in the hospital for over years and who was said to be the mistress of the Alcalde. In Patillas it is stated that outside sick receive food from the hospital.

Fourth: Hospital Buildings: In the majority of the municipalities the hospital is erected in a spasm of enthusiasm excited by the Alcalde the city physician and after erection it is practically forgotten and abandoned except in so far as may be necessary to supply it with the minimum appropriation for maintainance. For instance, Juana Diaz has 12-1/2 cents for all expenses of the sick poor per day, per person; Aibonito allows 1 cent; Coamo assigns 20 cents; Cayey assigns 20 cents. The Municipality of Arroyo has just completed a hospital and I am informed by the Inspector that they find themselves unable to maintain it and have been requesting

assistance from the general government. This same municipality is now petitioning the Legislature to have the Sanitary Law amended in such a way as to return the work of street cleaning and removal of garbage to the municipalities.

The results of this neglect is that the furniture and supplies rapidly deteriorate and become such as you have already seen in the hospital at Rio Piedras. In fact the conditions are so extremely bad in the hospital at Rio Piedras, Fajardo, Naguabo, Maunabo, Afiasco, and a number of others that they would have been closed as pestholds except that I never cared to take the responsibility of arousing the furor that will be excited by such a measure.

Because of lack of appropriation the personnel of these hospitals is absolutely ignorant and inefficient. The doctors with very few exceptions have never had any hospital experience and however enthusiastic at the beginning of their work lose that enthusiasm when confronted with the dense ignorance and lack of capacity of those who are assigned to them as their assistants in the care of the sick and of the building. This loss of interest on the part of the doctors is not to be wondered at in view of the conditions under which they are compelled to work. The annual report rendered to the Governor on June 30, 1913, includes a detailed statement of the conditions of the hospitals and first-aid stations in all the municipalities of the Island.

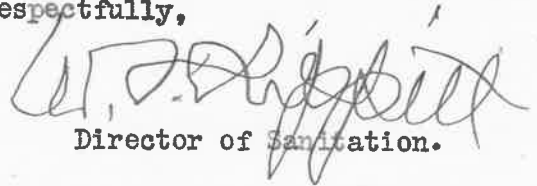
I believe that the hospitals of the Island should be under the direct control of the Department of Health, whether that department of health is known as the Service of Sanitation or by any other name. This is a matter of justice to the sick and to the Island in general. The Department of

Health should also exercise a considerable control over the service of medical attendance to the sick poor even if it is not made a part of that department for the reason that at the present time no records of any kind are kept by anyone of the city physicians outside of the hospitals and with the exception of the hospitals situated in the first class towns the records kept are of no value.

With the exception of the first class municipalities the income is not sufficient to maintain hospitals in proper condition. Wherever such a hospital is maintained it is the custom of the neighboring municipalities to send their sick into the town which maintains a hospital, abandoning them on the streets of the town in such a way as to compel the municipal authorities to take care of them. This to my personal knowledge has occurred frequently in the city of San Juan and I have been told by the municipal authorities of the other towns that exactly the same conditions exist with them.

There are under the Insular Government certain institutions such as the Manicomio, and the Blind Asylum in Ponce which are of a distinct medical nature and which therefore should be under the control of the Department of Health. This Department should also have supervision if not direct control over the different examining boards, such as The Medical Examining Board, and the Board of Examiners for Pharmacists and all other of alike nature which may hereafter be established. These at the present time are altogether independent of the control of any department. Upon your return I will submit to you a detailed report of the inspection.

Respectfully,


Director of Sanitation.

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR, CHARITIES, AND CORRECTION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
SAN JUAN

ADDRESS ALL OFFICIAL
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE
DIRECTOR OF
LABOR, CHARITIES, AND CORRECTION
SAN JUAN, P. R.

February 4, 1914.

My dear Dr. Yager:-

In a hurry and resorting to your kind attention, I write you these notes in case you be pleased to consider them.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, CHARITIES AND CORRECTION.

It may be that if the Foraker Act is reformed this Department be discontinued, transferring the Bureau of Prisons to the Office of the Attorney General and the Bureau of Charities to the Service of Sanitation. That has been stated before now.

Being acquainted with the matter, the annexation of those bureaus to other Departments I deem it to be prejudicial.

In the United States, there are in the different States a Director of Prisons and a Director of Charities acting together with a Board made up of five members. You will so find it in the States of New York, Connecticut, Texas and many others, if you ask for information to the Directors of Prisons and Charities.

In Porto Rico, the same system existing in the United States could be established, creating the positions of Directors of Prisons and of Charities, each of which acting with a board of 3 members appointed by the Governor.

That would be more efficient for the purposes of the Institutions and for the administration of the same.

Those service branches are to attend to the moral and intellectual

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improvement and well-being of the inmates, in accordance with modern and scientific methods. In this direction I beg to be excused from being more lengthy, because you as a man of science know the subject better than I do.

Likewise a minute administration has to be attended to in order that it may result good. The question involves food, comprising the purchase of provisions, selection of rations, etc., clothing and shoes for the inmates, medical attendance and various other personal services. It also involves direction of working shops for industrial teaching as well as literary education, adapted to trades, and also orderly accounting, etc.

It is good to have at the head of those services a man and a board definitely responsible to the Government and to the country, as is the case in each of the States of the Union.

An Attorney in his department as well as the Director of Sanitation in his own, have to attend to important matters to be able to realize the purposes and perform the administration, under their own action, of said services which would have to be placed under subordinate officers, the responsibility being of the heads of the Departments.

The work would be doubled for the head of the department would have to sign all requisitions, vouchers, applications for leaves of absences and numberless other papers which would also have to be intervened by some other officer in charge of each of those bureaus. And it should also be borne in mind that the number of requisitions, vouchers and other different documents which have to be dispatched by those institutions is large.

(4 Feb)

Many a remark could be made in this direction but would make these notes too long.

My purpose is to sincerely try to show the greatest efficiency in all respects of the institutions, by creating the Directors and the board, as it is the custom in the United States.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND LABOR.

A Department like that is necessary in Porto Rico and the same could exist with a personnel modestly compensated.

Commerce is not included here, because a new bureau would be needed therefor and because Porto Rican commerce can have its own initiatives with the organisms which make it up in Porto Rico. Such a Department would consist of two bureaus, one the Bureau of Labor and the other the Bureau of Agriculture.

The first one you already know how it works in Porto Rico. The second would work in such a way that it would promote the progress of agriculture and the Department could create in each municipality a board, appointed by the Governor, and proposed by the Department, to study and promote the study and application of the crops which could be proper and convenient to have in each zone. A board could also be with representation of the elements representative of the different resources, said representation or members being appointed by the different industrial, commercial and agricultural associations.

On the subject much could be said that would make these notes too long and that you so highly educated perfectly understand.

(4 Feb

INSULAR BANK.

The application to Porto Rico of the United States Banking Act, would be of great benefit to the Island, specially under the present circumstances. The term now given by the banks is short and does not do any benefit to the farmers.

The monetary stock of Porto Rico is scarce. Financiers reckon that this stock represents 6% of the commercial volume. Taking this as a basis, the 6% on 86.000.000, which was the commercial bulk in 1913 would be \$5.160.000. However, it will be noticed that the money stock in all the banks of Porto Rico, including paper money, gold and silver on June 30, 1913, only amounted to \$2.510.227. It should be borne in mind that in Porto Rico, corporations, business houses and even individuals, deposit their money in the banks. It is doubtful whether outside of that amount there is still another sum of \$2.500.000 in circulation.

A Bank that would facilitate currency circulation would be highly convenient.

L O A N S .

The Organic Act only permits a 7% on the taxable property for the purpose of loans, The increase of this percentage in the Organic Act, would be necessary, as the taxable property may not give enough to meet with the 7% now provided, the guarantees that may be needed later.

The property now subject to taxation in Porto Rico, is valued at \$179.000.000, but it is necessary to bear in mind that this property was increased in value by \$23.000.000, from 1906 to 1910, and by \$57.000.000, in later years up to this date, making a total of

\$80,000,000; and that the depreciation of all lands due to the sugar disaster will require the reduction of taxation.

SUGAR QUESTION.

The words of yours supposing that sugar will not be left free on the tariff in May, 1916, have afforded a great hope.

The situation brought about by the knowledge that sugar would go free on the tariff from May, 1916, has been terrible. You have indeed appreciated it, with your fine spirit of observation.

In 1913, a great area of land has not been planted, wherefrom the last gathering in of sugar canes had been effected, and in 1914 much less will be planted.

Though sugar goes free on the tariff in May, 1916, as far as Porto Rico is concerned it would actually go free in July, 1915, because the sugar crop ends in June or July and, therefore, nobody in 1915 will plant or maintain any plantation of sugar the crop of which would be gathered in May, June and July, 1916, that is, after the sugar is already free on the tariff.

Credit, on the other hand, is closed for the sugar cane planters.

Therefrom the derivation of a social problem will soon take place, that is, misery among the laborers and even among the middle classes.

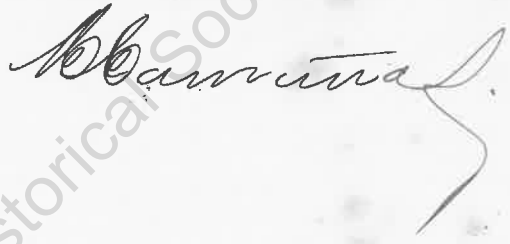
As relates to Arroyo, Caguas, Carolina, Gurabo, Dorado, Juncos, Maunabo, Manati, Patillas, Ponce and Toa Baja there are data that the average daily wage of 460 laborers working on sugar cane plantations one year ago was 66 cents and the average daily wage of the same laborers at the present time is 44 cents.

(4 Feb

The extent of unemployment among the workers who have been accustomed to be employed by the sugar centrals is tremendous. Monthly reports are received by the Bureau of Labor from all agricultural laborers who are organized. These reports show that more than 44% of such laborers have been unemployed since the first of September.

I wish you the greatest success in the noble undertaking that takes you to Washington and for which you merit the gratitude of Porto Rico.

Very sincerely yours,



The Filson Historical Society

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR, CHARITIES, AND CORRECTION

BUREAU OF LABOR

SAN JUAN

ADDRESS ALL OFFICIAL
COMMUNICATIONS
TO THE
CHIEF, BUREAU OF LABOR
SAN JUAN, P. R.

March 10, 1915.

Personal and confidential.

Dear Governor Yager:

Another session of the Legislature of Porto Rico is nearly over and no important or fundamental legislation for the betterment of the laboring masses of our Island has been passed. What was done last year has been repeated this year. Studies of conditions have been made, not perfect studies, but as thorough as it was possible to make under the circumstances. Certain important and fundamental needs of our laborers are known. The same needs have existed in other countries and, to a large extent, ^{been} successfully remedied. We have sufficient facts to base our remedial legislation upon and to provide that any peculiar local conditions are properly guarded. Based on these facts, bills have been drafted and carefully studied by a few members of the Legislature. They have been extensively and eloquently discussed by many members. But no laws have been enacted.

Last year several good labor bills were introduced and referred to committees. Time passed. When they came up for discussion it was too late; everybody was tired and the Budget was before the Legislature. This year we tried to profit by our past mistakes. Mr. de Diego and Mr. Travieso both introduced Workmen's Compensation acts at the beginning of the session, and they both went to committees. We talked

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(10 Mar 15)

with Mr. de Diego at once and he agreed to include the insurance feature in his bill. At his request, we redrafted his bill providing for government insurance. We did all that we could to assist the Judiciary Committee of the Council when it was working upon Mr. Travieso's bill. And it should be said that this Committee has spent many hours on that bill. The bill of Mr. de Diego came up in the House the 3rd or 4th of this month and was side tracked. The bill of Mr. Travieso passed the Council on the 8th and went to the House where an effort is being made to side track it also. Last year a Compensation Act passed the House twice; this year it has passed the Council.

A bill providing for the homesteading of public lands was, as you know, placed in your hands about the first of January. You referred it to a member of the Council and, although we talked with that member many times, it was impossible to get any action until two bills, dealing with the same subject were passed by the House and came to the Council. These bills were amended and practically the same bill which was handed you in January and which included your ideas regarding the problem is now in the committee on Public Lands of the Council.

Bills amending the Women and Children Labor Law and the Law Establishing the Bureau of Labor were introduced in the Council early in the session. These bills were based on two years of experience. The former has passed both Houses, but in such form that it means almost nothing. The latter

(10 Mar 13

was defeated in the Council.

A bill providing for the payment of wages to laborers was introduced about three weeks ago in the Council. It is still in the Committee on Commerce and Agriculture of that body.

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The Budget is again before the Legislature.

Some of these bills, at least, are extremely important. They will make life better for hundreds of poor people. Human life and limb are cheaper in Porto Rico than in any state of the Union. This is not merely an assertion; it is based on facts which we have gathered and tried to publish in our reports. Approximately 700,000 people are landless; rents are exorbitant; and the Government has thousands of acres of land. The Woman and Child Labor Law, an excellent law, is being violated because of insufficient provisions for its enforcement. Hundreds, yes thousands, of laborers of Porto Rico are being directly cheated out of their wages because they have no means of forcing their employers to pay or because they are obliged to patronize certain stores.

Those who are personally interested in defeating labor legislation realize the value of delay and its tactful and political advantages over open opposition; and they are succeeding, and nobody appears to be to blame.

There are a few members of the Legislature who are sincerely interested in the laboring masses and who deserve all honor for what they are trying to do, but there is no one of force and influence who has a personal, direct and supreme

responsibility for the welfare of the workingmen and their dependents. How different from the interests of the legal profession, of sugar and coffee, for example!

I am not sending this letter officially and I will not show it to anyone. I am writing it myself. It is not for me to criticise and I do not wish to do so; neither do I intend to complain. My own inefficiency is undoubtedly one of the chief reasons for the lack of action which I have described. But two years and a half of work in this office has aroused my deepest interest in the poor people of our Island - who are often exploited by their employers, continually fooled by their political leaders and, I fear, misled by their own labor leaders. The remedy I am not able to suggest. Perhaps something might be done at this session; perhaps no legislation could be passed even if a special session were called. We are talking with the members of the Legislature, we are trying to interest them in the facts as to the conditions which require legislation, but such work avails practically nothing and I do not know what else to do.

Respectfully and cordially,

J.C. Bills Jr.

CÁMARA DE DELEGADOS
DE PUERTO RICO

OFICINA DEL SECRETARIO

San Juan, P.R.-
Marzo 28 de 1916.-

Señor :

A petición del Hon. Delegado señor Cayetano Coll Cuchí, por orden del Hon. Presidente y de acuerdo con la Regla 11, párrafo 15, del Reglamento de la Cámara, tengo el honor de rogar a V. H. que se sirva enviar una información sobre los siguientes extremos:

"Primero: Si sabe el Gobernador de Puerto Rico que el señor Roberts, Jefe del Negociado del Trabajo, en compañía de los agitadores que sostienen la huelga en el Distrito de Arecibo, ha subido a la tribuna pronunciando discursos para que los trabajadores agrícolas sostengan la actitud que han asumido frente a sus patronos, en dicho Distrito.-"

"Segundo: Si el Gobernador sabe si las personas en compañía de las cuales ha subido a la tribuna el señor Roberts en esta propaganda, son las mismas que en las mismas tribunas y en la prensa han insultado abusivamente a todas las autoridades de la Isla, e incluso al mismo Gobernador."

"Tercero: Si el señor Roberts, Jefe del Negociado del Trabajo, quien por la Ley debe ser el medio de que cualquier diferencia entre patronos y obreros sean transigidas amigablemente, ha solicitado o recibido autorización del Gobierno, de alguna clase, para desde la tribuna pública, prestar su influjo oficial a los huelguistas contra los patronos."

Muy Respetuosamente,

Fosellund Riva
Sect. Cámara Delegados.

Hon. Gobernador de Pto-Rico,
San Juan, P.R.

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Mr. Hall: -

Please have this translated for the governor.

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The Filson Historical Society

TRANSA TION.

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF PORTO RICO,

San Juan, March 28, 1916.

Sir:

Upon petition by the Hon. Delegate Cayetano Coll Cuchí, in pursuance of instructions from the Hon. Speaker, and in accordance with Rule 11, Paragraph 15, of the Rules and Regulations of the House, I have the honor to request that Your Honor be pleased to submit a report on the following points:

"First: Whether the Governor of Porto Rico knows that Mr. Roberts, the Chief of the Bureau of Labor, has mounted the tribune together with the labor agitators keeping up strike in the District of Arecibo and made addresses encouraging the agricultural workers to maintain the attitude they have taken toward their employers in said District."

"Second: Whether the Governor knows whether the parties in whose company Mr. Roberts has mounted the tribune in the campaign are the same parties who from the same tribunes and in the newspapers have in an abusive way insulted all the authorities in the Island, not excluding the Governor himself."

"Third: Whether Mr. Roberts, the Chief of the Bureau of Labor, who under the law should be the agent for the friendly settlement of any difference between employers and workmen, has requested or received authority of any kind

(28 Nov 16)

from the Government to lend his official influence to the strikers against the employers."

Very respectfully,

(Sgd.) José Muñoz Rivera,

Secretary, House
of Delegates.

The Honorable

The Governor of Porto Rico,

San Juan, P. R.

The Filson Historical Society