

**CITIZENSHIP OF PORTO
RICANS,
TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1912**

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Citizenship of Porto Ricans, Tuesday, May 7, 1912 by Various

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VARIOUS

**CITIZENSHIP OF PORTO
RICANS,
TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1912**

COMMITTEE ON PACIFIC ISLANDS AND PORTO RICO.

UNITED STATES SENATE

WILLIAM LORIMER, Illinois, *Chairman.*

HARRY A. RICHARDSON, Delaware.

MOSES E. CLAPP, Minnesota.

KNUTE NELSON, Minnesota.

FRANK B. BRANDEGGEE, Connecticut.

MILES POINDEXTER, Washington.

ALBERT B. BAIL, New Mexico.

JAMES P. CLARKE, Arkansas.

ROBERT L. OWEN, Oklahoma.

DUNCAN C. FLETCHER, Florida.

CLARENCE W. WATSON, West Virginia.

JOHN W. KERN, Indiana.

CHARLES E. WARD, *Clerk.*

D. OF D.
JUL 2 1913

Handwritten notes and signatures: "JL 1912" and "1912" with a large diagonal slash through them.

CITIZENSHIP OF PORTO RICANS.

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1912.

COMMITTEE ON PACIFIC ISLANDS AND PORTO RICO,
UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, D. C.

The committee met at 10 o'clock a. m.

Present: Senators Clapp (acting chairman), Brandegee, Poin-
dexter, Clarke, Fletcher, Watson, Kern, and Fall; also Hon. Henry
L. Stimson, Secretary of War; Col. Frank McIntyre and Col. French,
of the Bureau of Insular Affairs.

The committee having under consideration the bill H. R. 20048, as
follows:

[H. R. 20048, Sixty-second Congress, second session.]

AN ACT Declaring that all citizens of Porto Rico and certain natives permanently
residing in said islands shall be citizens of the United States.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States
of America in Congress assembled, That all citizens of Porto Rico, as defined
by section 7 of the act of April 12, 1900, "temporarily to provide revenues and
a civil government for Porto Rico, and for other purposes," and all natives of
Porto Rico who were temporarily absent from that island on April 11, 1899,
and have since returned and are permanently residing in that island and are
not citizens of any foreign country, are hereby declared, and shall be deemed
and held to be, citizens of the United States: Provided, That any person herein-
before described may retain his present political status by making a declaration,
under oath, of his decision to do so within six months of the taking effect of
this act before the district court in the district in which he resides, the declara-
tion to be in form as follows:*

"I, _____, being duly sworn, hereby declare my intention not to become a
citizen of the United States as provided in the act of Congress conferring United
States citizenship upon citizens of Porto Rico and certain natives permanently
residing in said island."

In the case of any such person who may be absent from the island during
said six months, the terms of this proviso may be availed of by transmitting a
declaration, under oath, in the form herein provided within six months of the
taking effect of this act, to the secretary of Porto Rico.

Passed the House of Representatives March 4, 1912.

Attest:

SOUTH TRIMBLE, Clerk.

STATEMENT OF HON. HENRY L. STIMSON, SECRETARY OF WAR.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN. Mr. Secretary, you may proceed.

Secretary STIMSON. Mr. Chairman, I am very glad to have this
opportunity to be here this morning. I think there will probably be
present in a few moments a number of gentlemen, with whom I have
been in conference, from Porto Rico.

◀ This subject of the citizenship of Porto Ricans is one which I have had brought to my attention very forcibly, particularly on my visit to Porto Rico last year, and I regard it as the fundamental question in our dealing with the island and the success of the establishment of an eventual system of self-government there. Historically, of course, as you gentlemen remember, the Porto Ricans, while they were under the Spanish rule, were citizens of Spain. They even had representation in the Cortez. They had the feeling of being full-fledged citizens of the distant country to which they owed their allegiance.

Senator POINDEXTER. Had they a superior privilege in that respect to the Cubans? Were the Cubans represented in the Cortez?

Secretary STIMSON. I think the Cubans were, too, if I am not mistaken.

Col. MCINTYRE. The autonomous government was extended to Cuba and Porto Rico in 1897, but in Cuba, because of the war, the government was not installed, but was being installed in Porto Rico.

◀ Secretary STIMSON. When the island was ceded to the United States, I think I am accurate in saying that from the very beginning, both on the part of the inhabitants of the island and on the part of the inhabitants of the United States, the relation has been regarded as permanent. The Porto Ricans came to the United States with the utmost loyalty and expressions of good will, and it has been a most loyal island ever since. It is a pleasure to travel through it and see the manifestations of respect and affection which are universally shown for the American flag and for the American Government. At the same time, they are thoroughly Latin-American. They have all the sensitiveness and all the spirit of that people. They have from the beginning looked forward to their connection with us as permanent, and they have seized upon this particular thing, their desire for citizenship and the fact that we have not given it to them, as the one badge of inferiority which one nation could put upon another. In other words, while it is hard to put a finger on any practical change which the granting of citizenship would make in the relations to this country, sentimentally it is of vital importance in removing what has become a rather deep-seated source of irritation.

◀ Last summer I traveled through the West Indies and saw a good many Latin-American peoples, and I found that when they would speak to me frankly they regarded this attitude of the United States toward Porto Rico as an evidence that we regarded not only the people there, but Latin-American peoples in general, as of a different class from ourselves, and of an inferior class. And therefore not only in respect to our political relations with Porto Rico itself, but to our diplomatic relations with other countries of the same blood, it seems to be a very deep-seated sore and irritation.

My experience is not at all exceptional. It has been the practically universal testimony of every one who has had anything to do with the island of Porto Rico for the last six years that this problem underlies the problem to obtain that sympathetic relation with the island which must be the foundation of a satisfactory government.

The different governors who have been down there have all reported, in favor of it. It is not at all a party question. Both parties

in the United States have adopted it in their national platforms. President Roosevelt, several times during the last administration, recommended it in his messages. President Taft has recommended it in a letter to Mr. Iglesias, and there seems to be no difference of opinion as to its importance to the island or its relation to orderly government there.

Now, I do not at all minimize the seriousness of the question or the necessity of looking forward, when we take such a step, to see where we are going. On the contrary, it is the importance of that that I think has impressed me most. The objection which has been made to the granting of citizenship to the Porto Ricans is that it will lead to the ultimate statehood of Porto Rico. That, of course, is a most serious question not only in itself but in its bearings upon the ultimate relations of the United States to the various communities in the Caribbean Sea.

There are 1,200,000 people in Porto Rico. There is no doubt as to the importance of any step which creates 1,200,000 American citizens in a compact island. Furthermore, I think that nobody, who travels as we did last summer through the Caribbean Sea, and who looks historically back over the relations of the United States to the different communities there and the growth of those relations, can fail to see the tremendous bearing which any governmental step taken toward one of these communities may and very like will have upon the relations of the United States toward the other communities.

Now, I am one of those who feel very strongly—I am speaking, of course, personally—that the ultimate statehood of Porto Rico would not be of benefit to either Porto Rico or the United States. I think there is at present no strong or formulated expression of desire at all for statehood in the island, and I think there is no strong or formulated desire for it in the United States, but I do think that it is very important that we should not take a position of drifting, and that our attitude toward Porto Rico and the relation of the two communities being deemed to be permanent should be definitely formulated as far ahead as we can.

For that reason I have myself been in favor of as frank an expression of views on this point by the different branches of the Government that are active in it as possible. I see myself no inconsistency in the grant of American citizenship to Porto Rico; no inconsistency between that and the ultimate ideal that Porto Rico shall have practically an independent local self-government. I think that is what the dominant party in the island have in mind, and I think that is what most of the people of the United States would prefer to have them do—that is, a relation where they exercise supervision over their own affairs, over their own fiscal and local self-government, with the link of American citizenship between the two countries as a tie, and in general such a relation between the United States and Porto Rico as subsists, and as has been found perfectly workable in the case of the various self-governing portions of the territory of Great Britain—Australia, for instance, and Canada, to the mother country.

Of course, that is a matter for you gentlemen. I only allude to it to rebut the argument that I have heard advanced, namely, that to grant American citizenship to Porto Rico necessarily involves ulti-

mate statehood. I want to lay stress this morning simply on what I have been obliged to see in my official duties; that is, the importance of this grant to Porto Rico.

Senator POINDEXTER. Is that importance a sentimental one, or will there be practical benefit to Porto Rico?

Secretary STIMSON. There will be some practical benefit, but it is mainly sentimental. But I wish to say right here that in dealing with Latin-Americans sentiment is a basis of the highest practical importance in our relations. Sentiment determines whether or not your government will be a success or a failure. The people are full of what they call "sympatica." They can not get along with a community that does not have it for them, and if they feel that you look down on them and treat them as an inferior class of beings you might as well give up any idea of establishing proper governmental relations with them.

Senator FLETCHER. What are the provisions of section 7, Mr. Secretary, if you can recall? The bill says, "That all citizens of Porto Rico, as defined by section 7 of the act of April 12, 1900."

Secretary STIMSON. What about it?

Senator FLETCHER. Do you remember, generally, what the provisions are—"all citizens of Porto Rico, as defined by section 7," etc.? I have not that act before me; I do not know just what it provides.

Secretary STIMSON. At present, as I recall the act, it constitutes the citizens of the island a body politic, under the name of "The People of Porto Rico." Suits in the island are conducted under that name, and they are known as The People of Porto Rico. It is true that they owe allegiance to the United States, and I suppose they are entitled to call upon the United States consuls and various diplomatic representatives for protection, but they do not do it as American citizens; and I have heard many Porto Ricans express to me their unwillingness to claim that right, on account of the fact that they could not do it as Americans.

Senator FLETCHER. I did not know but what section 7 defined what was meant by "citizens of Porto Rico." I presume it is likely the same thing as all natives.

Secretary STIMSON. Can you answer that, Col. McIntyre?

Col. MCINTYRE. I have not the act here, but it provides that the native inhabitants of Porto Rico, residing therein on April 11, 1899, shall be citizens of Porto Rico.

Secretary STIMSON. And by local law they are given the franchise in the local elections and other various rights.

Senator FLETCHER. Do you recommend any limitation on the franchise?

Secretary STIMSON. I think the bill contains one valuable provision in that respect. It aims to give the franchise collectively, which I think is regarded as important down there.

At the same time it provides that anyone who does not want to become a citizen of the United States can register himself before the proper authorities and retain the status which he now has.

Senator FALL. In that event, he could be a traitor to the United States and so long as he was not a traitor to Porto Rico we could not deal with him.

Secretary STIMSON. I think that would be true, except that citizens of Porto Rico would owe allegiance to the United States; but I think

it is so much less important than the fact that there should be given a safety valve that I do not think anyone would take advantage of that. (They are all very anxious to become citizens, but I do not want the door to be left open so that hereafter some agitator may say, "We were forced into it; we were never given a chance to express ourselves.")

(There is a good deal of political discussion in the island always. There are factions; and there are ambitious leaders; and it may become to somebody's interest to raise discontent at some time by preaching the doctrine that they have forcibly been made citizens of the United States.)

Senator FALL. And you leave them with the same franchise there as those who elected to become citizens of the United States; put them on an equality?

Secretary STIMSON. I would leave them with the same franchise; and I would leave them with this, so that they could stand up and be counted; and the result would be that no one would stand up and be counted.

Senator KERN. You spoke of a dominant party there. What is the principal dividing issue between the two parties?

Secretary STIMSON. Well, it has been a little hard to define it. It changes from time to time, but in general the dominant party is the party that is in favor of as much local autonomy, so to speak, as possible, as rapidly as it can be given them. The condition of the Government now is that there is an appointed governor and an appointed council and an elective assembly underneath that.

In general, what I have called the dominant party is in favor of the extension of elective part of that Government as rapidly as possible and the other is more conservative and desires to keep longer the status quo. There are other minor and fluctuating issues on which they divide.

Senator KERN. It is a kind of progressive and standpat issue there?

Secretary STIMSON. That might be one way of calling it.

Senator KERN. You spoke rather doubtfully of ultimate statehood. What is the principal objection that occurs to you as against that, a racial difference?

Secretary STIMSON. The racial difference is a very great difference. The difference of climate, habit, tradition, and distance, but perhaps more than anything else the fact that it would be for the first time going beyond the territorial limits of the United States, thus making a precedent for going beyond those territorial limits in other cases.

Senator KERN. You spoke, and very correctly, too, about sentiment being a very important element in government. Now, suppose those people were created citizens of the United States and they progress for a series of years in education and general enlightenment, and the sentiment springs up that citizens of the republic ought to be allowed to take part in the election of the governing power of the republic. If that sentiment should spring up, what effect would it have?

Secretary STIMSON. I am very glad you suggested that. It is going to naturally spring up unless they are given eventually a very much greater control over their own fiscal relations than they have now.

Senator KERN. It is entirely clear to me; this matter of local self-government. It has always been clear to my mind that they ought to have that.

Secretary STIMSON. I go further than that. (For instance, the island at present is, I was going to say, almost wholly, but certainly very largely, dependent upon our tariff on sugar. A change in that tariff may ruin Porto Rico in that particular industry, because, as has been pointed out, I think, before one of the committees here, they are shut in within the circle of our tariff. They have to buy in our markets at the prices maintained in the United States, and therefore they are dependent upon their predominant commodity being also protected.)

I feel perfectly certain that it would take only a few examples of that dependence to bring about an irresistible demand—perhaps not an irresistible demand, but a very strong demand—for representation in the law-making body which has to do with the making of a tariff. So that unless Porto Rico is given the same local tariff power and the same autonomy in regard to its commercial relations that the great self-governing colonies of England are, you will have, if they are not given that, an alternative demand for representation in the Government that does control.

(For that reason I think it is only fair to state now that I believe that anyone dealing with the problem of citizenship should also face frankly the problem that Porto Rico must eventually be given self-government, even to the extent of making their own tariff. Of course, we can expect reciprocal trade relations with the United States to be established simultaneously with and as a condition to such tariff autonomy.)

Senator FLETCHER. At present they get the benefit of all their revenues, I believe?

Secretary STIMSON. (At present they get very large pecuniary benefits to offset their lack of political power. They get the benefit of all the internal-revenue tax collected in the island. In addition to that, we expend out of our Treasury in improvement of their rivers and harbors—or rather not their rivers, they have no navigable rivers—moneys which come from our general fund, and taking the proposition as a debit and credit balance, at the present time they have nothing to complain of at all, because we are giving them as a bounty very much better pecuniary treatment than any State in the Union receives. But no community will remain even in the condition of a favored charity very long, and it seems to me that as Porto Rico proceeds along the line of trained self-government—and she is doing it very fast now—you have got to look forward to one or the other alternative—Statehood on the one side and local independence and local self-government with—)

Senator KEEN. Commercial independence.

Secretary STIMSON. Commercial independence on the other?

I think it is proper to call the attention of the committee to the progress which Porto Rico has made this winter in good legislation. There have been very harmonious and pleasant relations between the assembly there and the Bureau of Insular Affairs up here.

Senator FALL. Are both branches of their assembly elective?

Secretary STIMSON. No, sir; only the lower house; and the assembly has passed a large number of measures which heretofore they have not apparently seen the necessity for—sanitary measures, civil-service measures, election laws, and measures aimed at purifying their health, their politics, and their general government there. They, I