



FREE PUERTO RICO!

Newsletter of the Free Puerto Rico Committee,
North Americans in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence

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Referendum Continues:

Senate Committee Approves Puerto Rico Status Bill

Any doubt as to the democratic nature of the Bush Administration's proposed referendum on Puerto Rico's status was put to rest by the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee which approved legislation directing the referendum with blatant disregard to Puerto Rican self-determination. Despite public hearings sponsored by the committee in Washington, D.C. and San Juan this summer, at which Puerto Ricans testified, in the end the committee drafted Senate Bill 712 (SB712) which outlines the process for the referendum and defines the terms of the three status options — independence, statehood or continued commonwealth. The different alternatives each preserve US interests in Puerto Rico, in particular guaranteeing US military presence no matter what the status.

In spite of support by committee chairman Senator J. Bennett Johnston, the referendum bill was approved on August 2, 1989 by the committee with the unusually narrow margin of 11-8 votes. Why? Although each status option protects US military interests, certain US corporate interests could be jeopardized if Puerto Rico were to become the 51st state. Senators Wallop and Conrad, members of the committee who voted against SB712, both expressed concern about the financial implications of statehood. They stated that the committee had not fully considered the economic impact of making Puerto Rico a state. According to Senator Wallop, the bill is misleading because it induces Puerto Ricans to vote for statehood, "even though within a few years the loss of special tax programs could mean a massive loss of jobs and greater impoverishment for the island." His unstated concern is the impact statehood would have on US corporations earning tax-free profits in Puerto Rico under IRS Section 936, which would be phased out if Puerto Rico were to become a state or to gain independence.

The next step for SB712 is the Senate Finance Committee where it will be reviewed for tax provisions in hearings to begin at the end of October. Following these hearings, the bill will be presented for a full Senate vote, and then on to the US



House of Representatives for hearings and a vote. The legislation is to be complete in time to hold the referendum on June 4, 1991 — allowing the US to participate with a clean slate in the 1992 celebration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of America and the birth of colonialism in the western hemisphere. If none of the status options presented to the Puerto Rican people wins a majority on June 4, a run-off vote will be held on August 6, 1991.

In the wake of the adoption of SB712 by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) President Ruben Berrios reaffirmed his belief that statehood is impossible for two reasons. First, two-thirds of the US Congress would have to approve statehood for Puerto Rico. Given the divided outcome of the 11-8 committee vote and the dissension around statehood, this is a tall order. Second, statehood is not self-executing if it wins the referendum. The US Congress will have the authority to

(continued on page 3)

Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Jaime Delgado Speaks ...



The interview below was conducted by Free Puerto Rico! with Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Jaime Delgado. Jaime is currently serving a four-year sentence at the federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana.

FPR! Prior to your incarceration you did a lot of work in support of Puerto Rican POW's. How did that prepare you for being in jail? What were you not prepared for?

Jaime: My political commitment stems primarily from the example of the Puerto Rican patriots who sacrificed many years in jail, in particular Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Five Nationalists. Don Pedro, who was the most influential Puerto Rican in my life, spent 24 of his last 28 years of life in prison. But it was the issue of the Five Nationalists — Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andres Figueroa, Irving Flores and Oscar Collazo — that first outraged me and motivated me to learn more about the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence.

From 1973 to the time of my incarceration, the central focus of my political work had been the **National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners**. Besides the issue of the Five Nationalists, I worked on the cases of Puerto Rican Grand Jury Resisters William Morales, Pablo Marcano and Nydia Cuevas. When the 11 Puerto Rican Prisoners of War were captured on April 4, 1980, the commitment and strength they showed made me put aside many of my own petty criticisms of the movement. To me, the capture of so many people at one time made everything more serious and urgent.

The work I did with the **National Committee** helped prepare me for prison by reminding me on a daily basis of the commitment and sacrifice our struggle requires. In terms of what I was not prepared for raises the question of understanding exactly what a prisoner experiences on a day-to-day basis. The administration of the prison tries to make you as miserable as possible using petty issues on a day-to-day basis. I think there are problems that every political prisoner can expect to confront. One of the first, is of course, isolation. In

all cases that I know of, upon entering prison, every political prisoner has been put in the "hole." For someone who has never been in jail, this has a very disorienting effect. From there on in, every aspect of your life will revolve around the whims of each individual guard. Understanding this initial stage of incarceration is an important step in determining how you spend the remainder of your jail time. I think it's important that these things be talked about among people who are active and face the possibility of being arrested.

FPR! What impact has prison had on you?

Jaime: As someone whose primary area of work has been the Puerto Rican POW's and Political Prisoners, being in jail has given me a greater appreciation of the sacrifice that they are making. When you're in jail you confront the enemy every minute of the 24 hours in a day. Realizing that there are compañeros and compañeras who have been doing this for the last nine years in some cases, and five years in other cases, has given me a new level of political maturity. Going through this experience has made me more determined than ever to continue our struggle, and in particular, to struggle for the release of all our prisoners.

FPR! Do you experience any special treatment as a Puerto Rican Political Prisoner?

Jaime: The "special treatment" is the place where I'm being held. This is one of the most obvious ways that the state has chosen to punish me as a political prisoner. This facility is supposed to be a level 4-6, designed for people serving sentences ranging from 10 years to life. For a first-time offender serving a four-year sentence, the BOP, using its own standards, should not put me here. Putting me in a place like this is an attempt to put me in the most extreme situation without having to directly involve themselves on a day-to-day basis with harassment or intimidation. But this particular treatment started from day one of this case. Everything was done in a special way from the time the investigation started to our trial, where it was found that the FBI was taking documents from the trash can at the defense table, to the actual conviction to the choice of prison facilities. If you ask me if I'm treated differently than other prisoners here at Terre Haute, I would have to say no. If you ask me if I am being treated differently than another person with a similar charge, I would have to say yes.

FPR! What do you think of the Bush Administration's referendum on Puerto Rico's status?

Jaime: The referendum itself is a farce because it is totally a US initiative and under the complete control of the colonizer. Only by a total transfer of power to the Puerto

Jaime ...

Rican people can the referendum even resemble something legitimate.

This whole issue of the referendum is good only to the extent that it forces many *Independentistas* to get serious. It has forced the status issue to the forefront and can lead to a building of unity among various sectors of the Independence Movement. This unity can be used to confront not only the upcoming referendum, but more importantly to confront whatever comes after the referendum. Unity is not built from a whim, it comes from a realistic necessity when the reasons for uniting are more compelling than the reasons for not uniting.

At this stage I see no reason why any of the *Independentista* organizations should legitimize the referendum by participating in it. There is absolutely nothing to gain. I think we should close ranks to develop an intense and united campaign against this farce. A good example is the 1967 "plebiscite" which some people point to when they want to show how little support independence has among Puerto Ricans. *Claridad* recently published a copy of an FBI document in which the FBI says that the low showing of *Independentistas* in the 1967 "plebiscite" is more of an indication of the strength of the Independence Movement, which successfully carried out a boycott, than its weakness. If the only thing this referendum does is unite us against it, therein lies its full worth. For us it has no other value.

FPR! When released, what kind of work do you plan to do?

Jaime: Puerto Rican independence continues to be my priority in life. When I get out, it will continue to be my priority. One thing I have learned by coming to prison is how trivial our lives can be unless we are committed to putting back into this world more than we have taken out. If independence were not an issue, I would define what is the most important contribution I can make and go about doing it. I've never had to stop to think what I would do when I'm released from prison because for me, my incarceration is simply a continuation of a commitment which I made long ago. If there were something in particular that I want to do it would certainly be to redouble my efforts for the incarceration of all Puerto Rican POW's and Political Prisoners.

The National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and the Free Puerto Rico Committee are working with Freedom Now: The National Campaign for Amnesty and Human Rights for Political Prisoners in order to obtain Jaime's release and the release of 18 other Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners held in US jails.

Please write to Jaime at:

Jaime Delgado #94736-024
P.O. Box 33
Terre Haute, IN 47808

Referendum ...

make Puerto Rico a state when it chooses. And for the PIP leader, that day will never come.

Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) President Nestor Nazario denounced SB712 because it does not fulfill the requirements for a true decolonizing process in Puerto Rico. Nazario asserted that SB712 contains points that are totally unacceptable to *Independentistas*. Specifically, he referred to parts of the bill that give US authorities the right to supervise the electoral process. He said *Independentistas* don't trust the impartiality of the US precisely because it is the colonizing power. "Colonialism is a case belonging to the UN and it is the UN that should supervise the decolonizing process." Nazario added that the US is mainly guided by its military and economic interests.

Meanwhile, the Independence Movement in Puerto Rico and the US continues an unprecedented degree of unity in response to the referendum. Presently, many independence organizations and individual *Independentistas* have called for a campaign to boycott the referendum. However, dialogue continues as some in the Independence Movement — particularly the PIP — feel the movement can gain from critical participation in the referendum process with an option to boycott at any time.

Hartford defendant Filiberto Ojeda Rios, currently out on bail in Puerto Rico awaiting trial for the \$7.2 million Wells Fargo expropriation, added his name to the list of boycott supporters. In an interview in Puerto Rico, Ojeda stated that while he favors a boycott, he respects the position of the PIP and believes that their participation in the referendum process has been very positive and educational. "Until now, (the PIP's participation) has been beneficial, very intelligent and useful. It has helped the people to understand that independence is a viable, legitimate, respectable option..."

While events around Bush's referendum on Puerto Rican status progress in Washington, the Independence Movement and its supporters in the international community continue to denounce the referendum process and reaffirm support for Puerto Rican self-determination.

For example, on August 17, 1989, the United Nations Decolonization Committee again reaffirmed what has become its annual call for Puerto Rican independence. In doing so the UN committee implicitly rejected Bush Administration plans for a US-controlled referendum. The UN committee's resolution, adopted 9 to 2 with 11 abstentions, was a blow to the US which mounted an intense campaign for a postponement while plans unfold for the 1991 referendum.

Further international support for Puerto Rican self-determination was manifested at the 9th Annual Meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Nations held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia during the first week of September 1989. The body approved a strong declaration denouncing the colonial situation in Puerto Rico and affirming the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence.

Newsbriefs ...

Filiberto Ojeda Rios Not Guilty!

On Saturday, August 26, 1989 a Puerto Rican jury absolved Filiberto Ojeda Rios of eight counts related to the confrontation between himself and the FBI in which an agent was wounded. The incident took place on August 30, 1985, when the agents tried to arrest Filiberto at his home. The verdict, announced after only three hours of deliberation, is a great victory for the Puerto Rican people and the independence movement.

Presently, Filiberto is free on bond and with an electric bracelet on his leg awaiting the US Appellate Court's decision on other charges that he is facing stemming from the \$7.2 million Wells Fargo expropriation carried out by the Macheteros in Hartford, Connecticut.

This victory proved once again that a Puerto Rican jury will not be used as an instrument to imprison Puerto Ricans who struggle for independence of their homeland.

Thousands of Dollars Raised for Hurricane Hugo Victims

The tragedy of Hurricane Hugo has brought out the national character of Puerto Rico. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised in the Puerto Rican communities in the US. Community leadership in Chicago agreed that the money collected would not be given to the Red Cross or to any of the colonial government agencies. The money and resources were divided among the towns most affected on the island, adopting schools and hospitals. The Chicago Puerto Rican community also agreed to adopt the people of Vieques in the long term. Vieques, presently occupied by the US Navy, was hit by the full force of the hurricane.

The hurricane also brought out the third-class US citizenship nature of Puerto Ricans. Emergency relief aid to Puerto Rico was slow in coming from the federal government, whereas in South Carolina the aid came much quicker.



On August 12, 3,000 people marched 40 blocks during a torrential rain storm to demand an end to US colonialism in Puerto Rico.

Lexington Ruling Reversed ...

Judge Barrington Parker's historic legal decision regarding the political character and closing of the Lexington Control Unit, was unanimously revoked by the Washington, D.C. Appellate Court. This ruling allows the Bureau of Prisons to place prisoners in draconian conditions based upon their political beliefs.

In other news regarding the Lexington Control Unit Campaign, Puerto Rican Prisoner of War Alejandrina Torres was transferred to Pleasanton.

Please write Alejandrina at:

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FCI Pleasanton
5701 8th Street
Camp Parks
Dublin, California 94568

Chicago Passes Resolution Supporting UN-Plebiscite

On October 4, 1989, the city council of Chicago passed a resolution stating its support of a plebiscite in Puerto Rico. The resolution specifically calls for the plebiscite to be controlled and supervised by an appropriate international body such as the UN Committee on Decolonization. The resolution was introduced by Alderman Luis Gutierrez.

Free Puerto Rico Committee is a national organization that works to develop understanding and support for the struggle of the Puerto Rican people—invaded and seized by the US military in 1898—to liberate their nation and to establish an independent socialist society. As North Americans, we in FPRC work under the leadership of the **Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueño**, a US-based organization of Puerto Rican patriots. We have written material, slide and film programs on such topics as the 2020 Plan, the history of Puerto Rico and the independence movement. Please write or call the chapter nearest you to obtain a brochure, or to set up an audiovisual program and discussion.

Chicago—Box 295, 2520 N. Lincoln, Chicago, IL 60614 (312) 278-6706

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