

Luke Bachman

Castañer Newsletter

BROTHERHOOD RECONSTRUCTION UNIT

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BRETHREN SERVICE COMMITTEE

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NOTE ON THE SUPPLEMENT: On page 3 is a special supplement printed by permission of the Worldover Press from their issue of May 29, 1946. Worldover Press is published weekly at Wilton, Connecticut (\$5.00 per year), and is an excellent source of Latin American and other international news, facts and articles from recognized authoritative correspondents and specialists. We commend it to all who take a vital interest in such projects as ours.

Clarence Senior is the Director of the Social Science Research Center at the University of Puerto Rico. He is the author of a pamphlet--"Self-Determination for Puerto Rico"--published in April by the Post War World Council, New York, N. Y. for 15¢.

PRRA CONFERENCE

On June 6, 7, 8 the Castañer Project was the host of a three day conference of both Insular and Federal governmental technicians under the direction of the Governor's Office. About forty Department heads and technicians of eighteen agencies were represented to discuss the economic problems of the mountain area in Puerto Rico.

Many papers written by specialists were read to the group on specific problems of the mountain area economy, with time for questions and discussions after their presentation. Such topics as minor crops, specialized crops, animal husbandry, forestry, and markets were brought before the group for information and insights into the entire problem that confronts the mountain area.

Some of the most outstanding recommendations put forth by the conference members were as follows: a land capability survey should be made and productivity should be augmented, improved intensified farming should be stressed rather than extensive farming. This would provide employment, increase the domestic market and the export market, and through controlled methods the conservation of the Island's natural resources would be fostered. Legislation should be provided to facilitate credit to farmers, and a proper crop insurance plan should be developed. More demonstration farms or plots should be developed and more field technicians should be employed for direct supervision and aid. Direct education through the public school and the Extension Service must be pushed to remedy any of the Island's problems.

Some of the men attending the conference roomed in our "Casa Grande" and all of the members of the conference ate in our dining hall, being served by our kitchen staff. In appreciation of our services afforded them during the conference they left a sizable donation for the Hospital just before departing.

The conference was held in the Centro Comunal, and all meetings, reports, papers read, and discussions were conducted in the English language. As a result of this a great many of the Castañerites were able to attend most of the meetings with considerable profit in gaining a better insight into Puerto Rican life and problems, as well as meeting some of the Island's leaders.

HOOKWORM CONTROL AND SANITATION PROGRAM

About a year and a half ago it was realized by the Medical Staff and the Medical Social Worker that it was necessary to introduce a hookworm control project. It was found that many people had abandoned the use of their latrines because they were filled, and the people had not bothered to move them to new sites.

Gladden Boaz began working with the farmers, getting them to dig new holes and helping them to move their latrines to the new sites. He also made considerable improvement in the design of the latrines so as to make them as sanitary as possible. Gladden was discharged from OPS last winter, and in January went to Lares to teach in the high school. Knight Webster arrived at Castaner the first part of February and has completed the latrine program. This was accomplished in April, which means that now all of the nearly 200 families living on the PRRA project have their latrines in a sanitary condition.

The next step was to survey the area to see how many people had hookworm. This is being done now. When a person is found by laboratory test to have hookworm he is treated with worm prescription. Also individual instruction is given on the necessity of using the latrines, the wearing of shoes, and on general sanitation,

In the mountain area generally the incidence of hookworm is 90-100%. As a result of previous educational work and treatment with worm prescription it has been cut to below 50% in this area. It is hoped that we may rid this area of hookworm. This cannot be accomplished overnight, nor even in a few years, but it is not an impossible goal.

EDUCATION

For a number of months there have been some activities of the Unit Education Committee that have not been publicized, and now it seems only proper that we share this information with our interested friends. Through monthly voluntary contributions of Unit members and a few outside sources, a special fund has been formed, apart from the regular budget of the Unit, which is used exclusively for Puerto Rican students' aid. We are giving monthly financial assistance to deserving high school students making it possible for them to pursue studies that would otherwise be impossible. There is no local high school in our community, so students must live in other towns in order to study. Also we have aided some students to go to the States to study by urging local groups to support the students and contribute toward their transportation expenses from Puerto Rico to the States. In our own small way we are continually trying to promote educational advancement for the young people of our community, and will gratefully receive contributions from interested friends in the States which will be used in assisting the deserving students of our community who desire an opportunity to learn.

PERSONNEL NEWS:--Betty Kimmel, dietitian and seamstress, and Kathryn Hertzler, registered nurse, arrived at Castaner on June 11th. Gladden and Caryl Mathis arrived on the 21st and both are working in the Centro Comunal. Rufus King arrived in, or rather returned to, Puerto Rico on the 28th as Director of the Castaner Project. This will relieve Jim Martin so that he may return to the States with Mary. Rufus tells us that Wanda and Rufus, Jr. will be coming about the middle of August. On the 30th Margie Platt arrived to work in the Centro Comunal.

Alden Douglass left Puerto Rico about May 23rd for Berkeley, and this fall plans to study physical therapy at Stanford University. George Furse left Castaner about June 1st to study social work at the University of Puerto Rico. On the 27th Jim Mason and Clodomiro Paoli left Castaner for the States. Jim will attend Bridgewater College this fall, and Clody will go to high school in Portland, Oregon. Jim and Mary Martin plan to leave Castaner on July 24th, fly all the way to Los Angeles; visit in Oregon, then go to New Haven, Conn. where Jim will enter Yale Divinity school. Luke Bachman received his discharge from CPS on the 28th.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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SHARP FIGHT GOES ON FOR NATIVE PUERTO RICAN GOVERNOR

By Clarence Senior

Worldover Press Correspondent

San Juan, P. R.--The struggle over the successor to Rexford G. Tugwell as governor of Puerto Rico is gaining intensity, although receiving almost no notice outside the island. Essentially the struggle boils down to whether the new governor is to help Senator Luis Muñoz Marín carry out a program of using governmental power to help advance democracy, or whether he will block the program of the Partido Popular at the behest of local and continental reactionaries. Three candidates have appeared: Jesús T. Piñero, Resident Commissioner in Washington since 1944; Marine Corps General Pedro del Valle; and Martin Travieso, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Pinero is by all odds the most popular candidate and has the wholehearted backing of Senator Muñoz. He is the Cincinnatus of Puerto Rico--a man who gave up a large farm in order to devote himself to civic affairs. He has degrees from the University of Puerto Rico and the School of Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania. Long before he went into politics he spent his own time and money driving into the rural areas to talk with the jibaros (country people) and show them educational movies.

General del Valle, although born in Puerto Rico, has been absent from the island most of his life. A recent visit to his homeland is said to have convinced him that he would not be happy or successful as governor. He is being pushed, however, by U. S. Senator Dennis Chavez of New Mexico, whose son was del Valle's aide during several Pacific campaigns. Chavez' daughter recently married the scion of one of the richest families on the island. These two events seem to have strengthened the Senator's desire to have a finger in the Puerto Rican political pie.

Judge Travieso is widely criticized as an incondicional, or one "who has acted as errand boy for the United States". It is pointed out that he attended a meeting in April, 1939 at the Casa de Espana to celebrate the Fascist victory in Spain.

Some Puerto Ricans are saying that the choice may not be theirs to make, in spite of the talk from the mainland about extending democracy to colonial possessions. The Democratic National Committee is being subjected to great pressure to force the naming of a "safe and sane" man in place of the "radical" Tugwell. Judge Welburn Mayock, who came to Puerto Rico to prepare a report for the Committee, interviewed only opponents of the present government. His report, although never made public, is known to have been unfavorable in the extreme to the whole Popular program and to Tugwell. Even though the naming of a governor from among themselves will not make any fundamental change in their colonial status, the majority of the Puerto Ricans would look upon the choice of Pinero as a real step forward in improving relations between the island and the mainland.