

WORK RELIEF IN PUERTO RICO AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

MAY 27, 1943.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BELL, from the Committee on Insular Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. J. Res. 128]

The Committee on Insular Affairs, to whom was referred the joint resolution (H. J. Res. 128) to authorize an appropriation for work relief in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the joint resolution do pass.

The Committee on Insular Affairs respectively begs to report House Joint Resolution 128 favorably and recommends its passage for the following reasons.

Economic conditions in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are critical. This has resulted in widespread unemployment. While in the United States there is a shortage of manpower and a great demand for workers, conditions in the islands of the Caribbean, as a result of the lack of shipping to bring in raw materials for manufacture and to ship out finished products and agricultural commodities, have produced the opposite result.

Recognizing this condition, the Senate appointed a subcommittee to make a study of conditions there which has completed its study and recommended enactment of S. 981 which was approved by the Senate and is now pending before the Committee on Insular Affairs of the House.

This bill provides a rather extensive 2-year work program to relieve the distress and to produce much needed facilities which, it is claimed, will contribute to the economic independence of the islands.

By House Resolution 159, the House recently authorized this committee to make a study in Puerto Rico and a subcommittee is on the eve of departure for the islands for that purpose. It is clear that it will not be possible for the committee's investigation to be completed in time for immediate action on S. 981; therefore the committee has

sought some means of preserving this status quo to provide time for its deliberations, hoping to ascertain more accurately all needs of the islands.

The Senate committee found that the work program provided by the Work Projects Administration in Puerto Rico has prevented widespread suffering and general collapse of economy. It is the plan of the President, with whom the committee is in agreement, to close up the Work Projects Administration throughout the United States and the insular possessions by June 30 next. The Work Projects Administration is now employing on the islands of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands about 41,000 people on a large number of projects. Of these, 40,000 are employed in Puerto Rico. The cost for this employment is at the rate of \$1,600,000 a month.

The committee is unanimous in the view that some arrangement must be made to prevent the discharge of this great group of people on the 30th of June. The committee does not propose the continuation of the Work Projects Administration as such, but in lieu thereof, recommend to the House the passage of House Joint Resolution No. 128 which would authorize the Federal Works Administrator to provide work for employment of needy persons on useful public projects for a period not to exceed 5 months from July 1 next, according to the provisions and purposes of the Emergency Relief Act for the fiscal year 1943 insofar as they are applicable to such employment.

This legislation is admittedly a stop-gap arrangement pending the time when the committee can bring to the House its considered judgment after making actual observations of the conditions on the islands and after completing the studies of the various proposals that have been made to alleviate them.

It is the view of the committee that something must be done in this respect. The committee recommends enactment of House Joint Resolution No. 128 as the most effective way to meet the present emergency.

