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POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE OF PORTO RICO  
San Germán, Porto Rico

*BB*

February 6th, 1923

Hon. Antonio R. Barceló,  
Hon. José Tous Soto,  
San Juan, P. R.

Dear Sirs:

I have received a cable from the chairman of our finance committee who is a member of the law firm of Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett of New York City, which is as follows:

Harris Polytechnic Institute  
San German

Read message to Lindbergh American influence being resented. Tender my resignation Trustee and Chairman Finance Committee. Will use best efforts withdraw American financial assistance. Continuing enthusiastic support of you personally. Please publish this in school.

Workum.

This is an expression of what probably others feel in my Board of Trustees. As you know we have asked the Carnegie Corporation for \$1,000,000. This request will probably be considered during the next few days. Unless this impression of resentment by Porto Rico can be cleared up it will bring fatal results to our school and possibly to the whole island.

Will you please state clearly in terms which cannot be misinterpreted just what is meant by "Liberty and Freedom" asked for in your message? Does it mean political separation from the United States as an independent republic? Or rather does it mean a sovereign state of the Union?

Thanking you for your consideration, I am

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. W. Harris  
President

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

San Juan, P. R.

February 6, 1928.

Mr. J. W. Harris, President,  
Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico,  
San Germán, P. R.

My dear Doctor Harris:

We are answering your letter of this date. The message of the People of Porto Rico to the People of the United States entrusted to Colonel Lindbergh by the Legislature of Porto Rico at the joint session held in his honor does not need any explanation. It is self explanatory. Its meaning is plain. Porto Rico wants her internal sovereignty; that is to say, the same that the Continental States enjoy, but with the power to retain, as at present, all public revenues derived from sources on the Island to meet her public needs which are greater than those of any State because we are performing now the task of centuries.

We are not asking for international or absolute independence. We do not want to sever the ties of a common flag and a common citizenship. We acknowledge and accept the sovereignty of the Union as defined in the Constitution, that is to say, the powers vested in the Federation by delegation of the states themselves. We want the national tariff, but with power vested in our local Legislature to reduce, with the approval of the President said tariff on foreign raw food staples in order to lessen the cost of living for our laboring classes, and to increase, also with the approval of the President of the United States, the schedules on agricultural products of our soil not protected by the tariff and not produced in the Continental States, in order to prevent the importation of inferior goods into Porto Rico and their exportation as Porto Rican products. We want the guarantee of life, liberty, equality, justice and property of the Federal Constitution, that we fully enjoy now, in spite of the fact that the Great Document has not been extended to Porto Rico, because of the Bill of Rights contained in our Organic Act. We want to preserve the American institutions and systems that we ourselves have adopted in our laws; we aspire to a perfect friendship and close brotherhood with our fellow citizens of the States. Even we do not resent not being an integral part of the Union, in spite of our American citizenship, according to the decisions of the United States Supreme Court. But we aspire also, and above all, to the government of our people, by our people and for our people; that is to say, to a republican form of government. That is, certainly, American freedom. That is the freedom that we ask in the message of The People of Porto Rico

entrusted to the messenger of good will sent to us from The People of the United States. In the terms of the message: "The freedom that you enjoy, for which you struggled, which you worship, which we deserve, and which you have promised us." For this reason we state: "our message is not far different from the cry of Patrick Henry. It is the same in substance, but with the difference imposed by the changes of times and conditions." We reproduce the cry that he dared to raise, not against his English ancestry, but against "taxation without representation" and against the "guiding hand of governors appointed by the Crown"; we refer to it as an echo of your history, appealing to your national pride, not in a hostile attitude, not in an angry mood, but as a friendly notice to your people, to the American People, that we are neglected from the standpoint of our political aspirations and of our economic needs; that our voice is not heard, that you have forgotten that our progress in all the paths of human endeavor is far ahead of that of many of our sister Latin Republics of whose independence you feel so proud and are prone to maintain.

It is inconceivable that we would take advantage of the courtesy of the Governor in acceding to our request for a special session of the Legislature to render homage to Colonel Lindbergh and hand him a message containing petitions which may imply a severance of ties of Porto Rico from the United States, or which may be construed as inimical to American ideals. Such thing would mean a discourtesy to Porto Rico's guest and a lack of consideration to our Governor.

As regards our present political aspirations, we shall state in very few words that these are the following: Complete self-government including the right to elect our own Governor; as to the future, majority party has reached a conclusion as a compromise, between the conflicting of solutions of statehood and independence that this matter must be left to be solved by the coming generations according to the best interests of both the people of the United States and the People of Porto Rico.

As regards statehood permit us to say that if Congress is ready to grant us statehood, no doubt the people of Porto Rico will feel deeply the honor of becoming one of the stars of your glorious constellation. There are some of them that have sprung from the same origin, the same stock that we are. This is a matter that should be placed before our people for its decision. But what are the chances of statehood for Porto Rico in the light of the utterances of your statesmen and the silence of your political platforms? When collective citizenship was urged upon Congress by President Taft, the request was accompanied by the statement that citizenship did not imply any future promise of statehood. For these reasons, and many others, we are not now urging statehood. If you think it is better for your national interests

not to admit us into the Union, we will abide by your decision; but it is up to you to be true to your history and institutions and to devise a scheme of government for Porto Rico that will harmonize your dignity, liberty and happiness and ours. We will cooperate with you to find the way to the solution of the problem. But do not misunderstand us, do not be misled by the enemies of our noble aspirations as a People. Do not pronounce the word "disloyalty" to describe the deepest sentiment in the hearts of men: Love for the freedom of the country in which his cradle was rocked by the hands of a loving mother.

Your letter has been a surprise to us. We can not understand how the message of the Legislature can be construed as a plea for international or absolute independence. It is the same as our message to President Coolidge, transmitted also to the Pan American Conference, not because we look for redress or remedy for our inferior political condition, but because the President himself offered to the Conference the relief for that condition, that is to say, plain home rule; and for that reason we feel entitled to obtain the endorsement of the Nations of our own origin to the words of the chief magistrate of the nation in order that he may apply them to the sick man at home. In the said message the words "internal sovereignty", were changed by news agencies into "international sovereignty", entirely changing, of course the meaning of the statement. We shall not be surprised to find that the present message also has been mutilated or misquoted. That will explain the alarm voiced in the cable received by you. We trust that you will acknowledge that there is no reason for alarm or uneasiness. We voice a truly American sentiment which is imbued in the minds and hearts of all our school children by the study of your history, and which is also a natural sentiment deeply rooted in the hearts of human kind.

In conclusion let us answer with dignity that part of your letter wherein allusion is made to the question of money by saying: that had we had in mind the asking of independence for Porto Rico, the loss of one million dollars or of untold millions of dollars to all the institutions of Porto Rico, will not deter us in the least.

Yours very truly,

(sgd.) Antonio R. Barceló,  
President of the Senate.

(sgd.) José Tous Soto,  
Speaker, House of Representatives.