
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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**Albany, NY - Radio Address re Sailing of
Christmas Ship for Puerto Rico**

Albany, N. Y.
Dec. 21, 1932
W.O.K.O. 12 o'clock

Gov. Beverley - my friend.

At this hour a unique ceremony is taking place on board the "S. S. Colambo" at her pier in the East River, New York City. Members of the Porto Rico Child Feeding Committee, representatives of our churches and Governor Beverley with a group of friends from Porto Rico, are assembled on this ship to bless its cargo and to bid the ship "God Speed" on her errand of mercy.

This is the Christmas Ship for Puerto Rico. It will not carry toys and games or Christmas trees; its cargo consists of food for the desperately needy children of our own American Island, which in these recent years has been visited time and again with disasters so severe that a less courageous people might have given up in despair.

On this occasion, our nation again witnesses a practical demonstration of the true spirit of Christmas. When we know of the hunger of thousands of children, our hearts are touched and we are moved to do something to share a little that these boys and girls, who are not unlike those of our own firesides, may have something to eat.

I am deeply impressed with the work of the Porto Rico Child Feeding Committee. It is good to know

that there is no additional cost to this Committee for the preparation and distribution of the food. Not only has the Island Government whole-heartedly cooperated, but the people of Porto Rico themselves have been very generous, especially the local Parent-Teacher Associations, which have contributed so much in time and money. I admire the splendid courage of these loyal American citizens.

For the past two years over 40,000 boys and girls have been receiving one meal a day in 900 emergency feeding stations on the Island. Not less than 65,000 different children have received help through the work of this Committee.

As Chairman of the New York State Porto Rico Child Feeding Committee, I am glad to know that so much has been accomplished. There could be no more substantial testimony of the sincere interest and friendship which our people here on the mainland have for their fellow-citizens in Puerto Rico, than is shown in our willingness, even in these difficult times, to sacrifice and share something for the people of Puerto Rico, who have suffered so much.

The poverty in Puerto Rico, caused in part by the hurricane of 1928 and aggravated by the financial depression of the past three years, has been made extremely serious

by another very recent great storm, which swept across the Island. Forty-four complete municipalities, comprising a population of over 800,000 people, lay in the path of this terrific hurricane. Losses suffered by agriculture are estimated at over \$20,000,000. Total property destruction is fixed at at least \$40,000,000. Naturally the children are the first and greatest sufferers at a time like this. They should be the first to receive our help. I am told that at least 125,000 boys and girls in this ravaged area alone are in urgent need of food.

We must look to a constructive vigorous program for the welfare and rehabilitation of the entire Island. I am familiar with its many problems and am confident that any philanthropic investment made in Puerto Rico will bring good and lasting returns.

The heart of America has been repeatedly touched by the suffering of those far removed from us, but let us remember that Puerto Rico is in no sense foreign -- the port to which this Christmas Food Ship will sail is within the boundaries of our own Nation. It is true that at this hour we are compelled to meet more obligations of one kind and another than have been known for generations, and we must

meet them with greatly curtailed resources. At a time like this, however, we cannot fail to realize more fully the deep significance of the Biblical admonition: "Bear ye one another's burdens".

This is the spirit in which the Christmas Ship sails. May I send with it my own sincere Christmas greetings and the good wishes of all our people.
