

U.S. SPENDS A MERE \$185,000 IN PUERTO RICO FOR HOUSING

Provides Shelter for Only 340 Families in Town of 200,000 Needy

By Angelo Herndon

The United States Housing Authority announced last week plans for a \$185,000 housing project for Ponce, Porto Rico, as an initial attempt to rehabilitate 340 families out of a total of 200,000 who live far below the sub-standard level.

Considering the extreme poverty of the Porto Rican people, it would seem that this experimental venture falls far short of hitting at the root of the problems of the people living on this Island. But even this inadequate project is a result of the increasing struggle of the Porto Rican against Wall Street Imperialism.

There are over 80,000 people living in the city of Ponce and more than 70 per cent of them are unemployed. The whole country is over-populated with some 449.5 persons living in one square mile.

Funds for the project, which will be known as "Casario Borinquen," have been provided by a recent contract loan of the Housing Authority of the Municipality of Ponce.

MINIMUM NEEDS

The extent to which the proposed project will actually serve to rehabilitate the impoverished and destitute population of Ponce, is not stated in the news release issued by the Housing Authority in Washington.

The plan, according to the news release, "has been boiled down to simplicity to provide only what have been determined by careful study to be the most pressing needs of these famillier and at rents they can afford to pay. These immediate needs are adequately planned space and sanitary facilities, for the cli-

mate makes shelter of a secondary importance." (A. H.)

Fine, indeed! But if the climate makes shelter of secondary importance, why bother with housing? The answer is the pressure of the people.

The Washington news release dramatizes in poetic language the story of one Andrea Cintrone, wife of a \$3-a-week laborer of Ponce. She is depicted fighting her way through the flimsy shacks and literally through shallow latrines in the slums of Ponce. In a boiling hot tropical sun she climbs 100 yards uphill with a five-gallon can of water on her back. The sloshing water wets her from head to foot.

"The laving spillage," reports her investigator, "gives her some relief from fatigue, heat, and the nauseous odors that a lifetime of familiarity has made only endurable. But she moans each drop as wasted for the tepid water in the five-gallon can is the family's supply for the day and too precious to be used for bathing. . . ."

SHE'S "TYPICAL"

She, says the Housing Authority, is typical of 200,000 Puerto Rican families. The experiment with 340 families (just for the hell of it) out of a total of 200,000 who really have no homes and nothing to live in, is indeed a touching display of human benevolence.

Dr. R. A. Marin, 15 W. 110th St., a leading progressive Puerto Rican of New York, greeted the plan as a wonderful attempt. "But," he said, the appropriation for the Ponce project is hardly a scratch on the surface. Ponce is not even one of the worse towns in Puerto Rico. The people in the towns live in worse houses than the people in the country. You can imagine what that is like."

Dr. Marin said that on his last trip to Puerto Rico he found large families living in huts of about 8 by 12 feet.

"There were no toilets, no water, no space and everywhere they were

Step in Right Direction, Say Leaders, But Much More Must Be Done

forced to live on top of one another.

"Water is kept overnight in big barrels. Larva from mosquitos is left in the water and when the people drink it, they become suddenly ill. If the people were paid for their work, had better homes to live in there would be less illness from tropical diseases."

JUST A STARTER

Mr. Lorenzo Pinero, of the Spanish newspaper La Vox, said that he had no knowledge of the Ponce project, but that knowing the conditions of the people it could hardly be more than a sop in the pan. He also pointed out that for miles and miles in the sugar cane area of Ponce and throughout Puerto Rico, people sometimes sleep in the fields because they do not earn enough from the American sugar interests to afford the great luxury of paying for a tumbledown shack or hut.

Jose Santiago, organizer of the Lower Harlem Section of the Communist Party, in commenting on the Ponce project, said:

"Most of the people of Puerto Rico are unemployed, and this is necessary for the profits of the imperialists who have already practically robbed the country of its wealth."

MASSSES OPPOSE IMPERIALISM

The appropriation for the housing project, he continued, "is small compared to what the big sugar corporations have taken out of the hides of the Puerto Rican people. But even this is the result of the great mass movement in the country against Yankee imperialism. Perhaps it is some more bait to get the people lined up with America in her imperialist war aims. It is at such a time that they should continue to press for more from the imperialists."

Tenants will be placed in the new project at a shelter rent of about \$3 a year, which the Housing Authority feels is within their means to pay as well as provide for supervision of the project, materials for whitewashing and other repairs.



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