

First of all, that is a mistake. The people of Puerto Rico did not invade the United States. The United States invaded the people of Puerto Rico. At the minimum, the U.S. Congress has to tell Puerto Rico what is available on the table for a change in status. It is obvious that the present status is a problem. Why is it a problem?

If there has ever been a need for proof that Puerto Rico is a colony, we just found it. Puerto Rico cannot restructure its debt without permission from the United States. Puerto Rico cannot apply Chapter 9 without being included again. I have heard people who believe in Puerto Rico sovereignty, and even Puerto Rico independence, total independence, say, "We don't have the tools." Those tools are acquired through statehood, independence, or free association.

My question to you is—well, not this part, because this part is my comment. I think that what we are doing now is putting a Band-Aid on a major issue, because 2 years from now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now, the issue will be back again because Puerto Rico does not have the ability to resolve.

I read recently or heard recently, just to give you an example of where Puerto Rico finds itself, Mr. Chairman—I may be wrong, so I will stand corrected ahead of time, but I heard that Puerto Rico was going to buy plantains from the Dominican Republic and was told by the Federal Government it could not do so without its approval. That is how bad it has gotten at times.

I remember once Puerto Rico was going to have a foreign country irrigate some lands, and they were told by the State Department, "You cannot ask that foreign country to irrigate any land." So you know what Puerto Rico is? It is not treated equally. Only in war time is it treated equally.

So, my question to you is—you will be consulted as this bill is put together. You will be more than consulted, not you, but the Treasury Department and you, probably, one of the leaders in it. Would the Treasury Department consider making sure that that bill has language that says, "But we cannot ignore the fact that the status issue has to be resolved, and resolved once and for all"? Or are we going to continue to say that it is up to the people of Puerto Rico, the recipients of colonialism, that have to undo colonialism?

Because I can tell you, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, and I was born in the colony and now oversee the colony, so I probably need a psychiatrist on colonialism to deal with my situation, but I can tell you, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, that all the states get what applies to them, and then whatever is left over—even to get Puerto Rico on the back of a quarter during that program where we had states on the back of a quarter, I had to include special legislation to get Puerto Rico on the back of a quarter. Not a big deal, but it makes the point.

So, my question to you is, can we have the Treasury Department suggest strong language that says, "But don't forget, you have to resolve the status question"?

Mr. WEISS. Congressman, thank you for your compliments at your opening. I would like to return them. I have learned an enormous amount in our interactions with you.

Status is vitally important. Where I would like to disagree, respectfully, this is not a Band-Aid. This is a life-saving procedure