

February 16th, 1923.

Hon. Jose Tous Soto,
Ponce, P. R.

My dear friend:-

As indicated by Commissioner Blair, I saw Mr. Haynes, the Prohibition Commissioner, and spoke to him about a successor to Pesquera and recommended to him Mr. Eloy Estrada. He told me that he had received Mr. Estrada's paper with very good recommendations, but that he believed that at least for some time it would be better for us to have the present Director continue in charge; that he was having trouble everywhere because it was a very difficult position to handle and he believed that he was doing us a favor by not considering at present any of our candidates. I told him of my long conversation with Mr. Blair and insisted that we should be given another chance, as, in fact, we had no reason to suppose that Pesquera had failed in his duties, but that he simply had the misfortune of getting entangled with the Grand Jury matter. I was unable to convince Mr. Haynes, but that same day I called again on Mr. Blair and reported the result of my conversation with Haynes, and I have Mr. Blair's promise that he will look into the matter and decide finally when the time arrives for a new appointment.

Geigel's cable about the doings of the Legislature was received, and I immediately telephoned over to the White House that part of his cable which I thought the President ought to be acquainted with, and as to the balance, I will take it up with the President when I see him. I will state now though, that I don't believe that there is any foundation for the rumor regarding Senator New or Mr. Carmi Thompson. New told me himself that he would not accept that position, and it is insistently rumoured that he will be made Postmaster General after the 4th of March, when Dr. Work goes to the Interior Department. As to Mr. Thompson, he is too big a man, and very rich, and no one here considers him available for that position.

At last I have received notice that the President will see me at 3:40 this afternoon, and in case I am unable to

Hon. Jose Tous Soto

-2-

Feb. 16, 1923.

add to this letter, the result of my conversation with him. I will send a cable to Geigel this evening, giving the gist of the interview.

Regarding the Attorney Generalship, Senator Coats has his doubts whether he should accept it or not. He wants me to talk to the President as to his appointment as Governor, but it seems that the New York organization will not back him wholeheartedly for that position. It seems that Coats, while he was a state Senator at the time that Hughes was Governor of New York, got in bad with the Governor for opposing some of his measures in the Senate/ and it is feared by some of Coats' friends that if his name should come up in the Cabinet for the appointment as Governor, that Hughes might use his influence against him/ Coats at the same time cannot see his way clear to sacrifice his law practice to accept the office of Attorney General, without a positive promise of being considered for the Governorship whenever it becomes vacant, and this is regarded as something that cannot be well done by the President. Then, there is another difficulty in the fact that Coats is unknown to the President and to the Secretary of War. In any event, I will bring up the topic with the President and see how it strikes him.

Judge Towner is still very hopeful of being selected for Governor. He told me the last time I saw him that he understood that Reilly had said that as long as he had any influence in the White House that he would see to it that none of his enemies should get the appointment, mentioning Towner as one of his enemies. Towner says that far from being Reilly's enemy, he has exerted his influence with Cordova Davila, so that he would not press the charges against Reilly, and knowing that Davila expected the help of a few Democrats in the House, that he had requested Mr. Garrett, the Democratic ranking member of the Committee and at present Democratic leader of the House, to ask his friends not to insist in this matter, for it would be very embarrassing to the administration and that he knew that the President was willing to act very soon in the matter.

There is nothing more I can write about, except to say that I am preparing to sail for the Island next week, unless I should receive instructions to the contrary, or if I see that I should remain longer.

Sincerely,

P.S. --

Hon. Jose Tous Soto, -3-

NEW WILLARD HOTEL,
Washington, D. C.
February 16, 1923.

I had my talk with the President and he told me that he had not yet received the cable from Reily sending in his resignation, but that he expected it every minute. He then said that he was very sorry for Reily, whom he loved very much and considered him a good and honest man, only that he had made a few mistakes. We discussed the matter of Reily's troubles with the Grand Jury, and when I explained to him that what Reily did in the matter of expenses was done by every other Governor before him, and that even the tips given by Governors on railroads when traveling in this country were charged to the people of Porto Rico and that that could be proven if the records of the auditor's office were looked up, he said that Reily should have had that search made and presented to the Grand Jury. I explained to him the treachery of the executive secretary, who had advised Reily that his expenses were rightly carried by the appropriation for expenses of the Executive Mansion.

I told the President that my friends wanted me to convey to him their desires as to the man who should succeed Reily, and he then said that he himself did not know at this moment who the successor would be. Judge Towner had just been in to see the President before me, and I asked the President whether Towner was being considered, and he answered that Towner was one of the candidates and wanted me to tell him what I thought of him. My answer was that Judge Towner was a very capable man, who knew our situation thoroughly, but that I considered him too friendly to Cordova Davila and the Unionists, and that I was afraid that the Unionist crowd would try to dominate him and push him off the Island, the same as they have done with Reily, if he did not yield to their wishes. The President said that no man who was too friendly to Davila would make a good Governor of Porto Rico, and that he would see to it that the man succeeding Reily will go down with his instructions to hold a "stiff back and a set jaw" and carry out his instructions, which were the same policies enunciated by Reily, but which the latter, unfortunately, was unable to carry out on account of his lack of tact and diplomacy. The President said that the selection would be made in a few days, so as to enable the Senate to confirm the nomination on March 4th.

The President said immediately thereafter as follows:-

"As soon as I receive Reily's resignation, I am going to remove Mestre."

Entonces puse sobre el tapete la cuestión de la enmienda de la Ley Orgánica para facilitar a los republicanos y socialistas unirse para elegir los candidatos para las elecciones de 1924, y entré en una explicación de cuales eran nuestras intenciones y cómo los unionistas habían enmendado la Ley en 1920 sabiendo que una combinación de las dos minorías ciertamente los derrotaría, tanto para el cargo de Comisionado Residente como para miembros de la Legislatura local. El Presidente dijo que él no veía como eso pudiera remediarse al presente porque en este país habían muchos estados de la Unión donde existía una disposición semejante en la Ley y mencionó la Ley Electoral del su propio estado, Ohio. Pero cuando le mencioné la posibilidad de descartarnos de Córdova Dávila si se efectuaba la combinación, el Presidente dijo: "Por el amor de Dios, traten de efectuar esa combinación por medio de alguna forma local y envíenme un buen republicano que tome el puesto de este sinservil que tienen ustedes aquí."

Hon. Jose Tous Soto

-4-

Feb. 16, 1923.

The President then asked me if I did not believe as he did, that the man appointed should be from up here? I told him that that was my belief, and then I proceeded to explain about the candidacy of Coats, telling him that the Senator would accept the position with the Understanding that if he made good, he should be considered for the Governorship in case the same should become vacant, and I then told him that Coats would be endorsed by Senator Wadsworth, Committeeman Hilles, and others of New York. The President said that the man selected for Attorney General would have to go down with the intention of making good and without any other consideration, because he would not be able to make any promises that would tie his hands for the future in appointing a Governor. I thought that that ended the matter with Coats. The trouble is that Coats is not known at all by the President.

I then brought up the question of amending the organic act so as to enable the Republicans and Socialists to join hands in selecting candidates for the 1924 election, and then entered into an explanation of what our intentions were and how the Unionists had amended the law in 1920, knowing that a combination of the two minorities would certainly beat them, both for Congress and the local Legislature. The President said that he did not see how that could be remedied at present, because up in this country there were many states of the Union where such a provision existed in the municipal law and he quoted the election law of Ohio, his own state. But when we talked about the possibility of getting rid of Cordova Davila, if such a combination should be made, the President said, "For God's sake, try and effect that combination by some local means and send a good Republican to succeed this good-for-nothing fellow you have up here."

The rest of the conversation with the President did not amount to much, except that he said that any amendments to the Organic Act would have to come now by the recommendation of the Governor succeeding Reilly, and he concluded by saying that he was always glad to see me and talk Porto Rican matters. He asked me how long I was going to stay here, and I told him as long as necessary to meet the new Governor. He smiled and said that

Hon. Jose Tous Soto

-5-

Feb. 16, 1923.

would not take so long.

About noon today I received Geigel's cable, and before seeing the President I had a talk with Judge Towner, who told me that he himself had an engagement to see the President today, and requested that I say a good word in his behalf regarding the Governorship. +

As I told you above, I was getting ready to leave by the steamer "Porto Rico" sailing on the 24th instart, but I will comply with your request to stay in Washington a little longer, so as to find out all that I can about the situation and meet the new Governor and Attorney General. I am cabling you today about my interview with the President and hope that if everything goes right, I will be able to leave on the "San Lorenzo", leaving the 10th of March. I will now try to see the Secretary of War, either tomorrow or Monday.

Believe me, as ever,

Sincerely yours,

*As a matter of fact, Towner said Harding
that same day, just ahead of me, and
when we met in the Secretary's office,
he requested me to mention his name
to the President as Riley's successor.*