# Puerto Rico: Our Modern Trojan Horse

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Sometimes I think there are only two classes of people: those who can profit by the mistakes of others and those who insist on making their own. With the glaring example of Quebec just across our northern border, a festering wound of ethnic disunity verging on national dissolution, how could the Republican Congress even think of permitting Puerto Rico to play a similar role in the United States?

Once inside our Union, Puerto Rico would be a modern Trojan Horse. The inherent problems of Puerto Rico would leap out and do irreparable damage to our nation.

The most important issue about Puerto Rico is whether Americans are willing to admit a 51st state whose people don't speak English, don't intend to learn it, and are even antagonistic to the whole idea of learning English. At least three-fourths of the people in Puerto Rico don't speak or understand English.

Making Puerto Rico a state would transform America overnight into a bilingual nation. No one could seriously argue that Americans want that to happen, so why isn't this discussed in the national media?

English is the language of our Declaration of Independence and our United States Constitution. It would be divisive and troublesome to bring in a state whose people don't speak the language of our founding documents.

Yet, without resolving or even addressing the language problem, Congress appears to be rushing toward a vote on H.R. 856, the U.S.-Puerto Rico Political Status Act. This bill wouldn't plunge Puerto Rico immediately into statehood, but it would put Puerto Rico on the track to a plebescite that would trigger statehood.

If Puerto Ricans vote to retain their present commonwealth status, then they would have to vote again every 10 years until they choose statehood or independence as the island's permanent status.

When Puerto Rico held a plebiscite in 1993, its people voted 48.6 percent to continue the present commonwealth status, 46.3 percent for statehood, and 4 percent for independence. Under H.R. 856, a one percent majority for statehood would commit us to begin the statehood process.

What sense would it make to admit a new state in which 49 percent of the people are opposed to the idea? Do we want to admit a state that is ripe for secession?

Americans should study the close parallel between the Puerto Rican question and the movement to separate the province of Quebec from Canada. The French-speaking majority in Quebec wants to maintain its language, culture, identity, and even sovereignty in the midst of English-speaking surroundings.

The separatists keep doing better than expected in each election. With a 92 percent turnout in the October 30, 1995 referendum, secession lost by only a razor-thin margin: 50.6 percent of Quebecers voted to keep Canada one nation, while 49.4 voted for Quebec to secede.

That was an unforeseen and dramatic increase since the separatists' 60-40 defeat in a 1980 independence referendum. The close vote adversely affected Quebecan financial markets, caused a flight of capital and people, and left wounds that will take a long time to heal; but the separatists are already gearing up for the next referendum.

The Puerto Rican independence faction is small, but that doesn't mean its members would acquiesce in being outvoted in a democratic election. They are among the most militant groups in the world, and there is considerable evidence that they include Castro's surrogate terrorists.

Puerto Rican terrorist groups were responsible for 55 percent of domestic terrorist group incidents in the United States during 1980 to 1986. Many Puerto Rican extremists are known to have received terrorist training in Cuba.

Statehood would cost the rest of us plenty in taxes. It's no island paradise; the average income of Puerto

Ricans is less than half that of our poorest state, and statehood would bring immediate demands for massive federal funding.

Two thirds of the population lives below the federal poverty level. At least half of Puerto Ricans receive food stamps. Unemployment is about 15 percent.

Infrastructure, the environment, and education are all far below American standards. Drug-related murder is worse than New York or Washington, DC., and the incidence of AIDS is higher than anywhere in the United States.

If Puerto Rico becomes a state, it would claim eight representatives in Congress and two U.S. Senators, and they would all be Democrats. That's more Congressional representation than 25 of our 50 states.

The vote that Congress is about to take will have momentous effects on whether America remains "one nation indivisible" or whether we start down the road of Quebec, Ireland, and countries that have fought bloody wars when minority populations tried to maintain a separate language and cultural identity within another nation.

Puerto Rico is a relic of our colonial days; we got it as booty in the Spanish American War of 1898. Let's celebrate the centennial of that War by giving Puerto Rico its independence.