



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ARA

No. 747

American Embassy

Habana, Cuba, September 29, 1949

RESTRICTED

REC 2
CST 3

Subject: Morality of the Cuban Congress. Editorial
comment by the Diario de la Marina.

ACTION
ARA

INFO
DCR
RTP
CUI
CFL
I
UNA

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

RECEIVED
SEP 30 1949
Lle *82*

Sir:

I have the honor to report the following editorial published in the conservative Diario de la Marina of September 28, 1949 on what it considers the low state of morality in the Cuban Congress.

"RELATIVE TO LEGISLATURES AND 'RIDERS'"

"We have deliberately let pass without editorial comment the opening of the new ordinary legislative session. Reluctance? Lack of confidence? Skepticism? No, simply professional decorum. It pains us to emphasize the importance of the inaugural session of the Congress when previous legislatures have been so completely ineffective. It hurts us to contrast the importance of the extraordinary event of the opening of congresses in other countries of deep democratic tradition with the routine inauguration in Cuba, without constructive faith, of a new session of our semi-parliamentary body which Ferrara (Orestes Ferrara, former Minister of State and now roving Cuban Ambassador in Europe) has so properly qualified as a body without a shadow.

"There has been one legislative session after another during the months of the present year. After the ordinary session of last December, a special session was inaugurated, but which terminated on March 18 in complete failure, the Senate having failed to meet to discuss proposed laws so fundamental as that of the Tribunal of Accounts and the Law of Accounting for the State, the Province, the Municipalities and the Autonomous Organizations. The Chamber engaged in a discussion of the amendments to the Law of Constitutional and

RESTRICTED

Social

8 OCT 13 1949

FILED

FAP

837.03/9-2949

RESTRICTED

Despatch No. 747
September 29, 1949
Embassy, Habana, Cuba.

- 2 -

Social Guarantees, but only to attach there-
to a 'rider' (a matter having no relation to
the spirit and letter of the law) to increase
civil retirement pensions of the legislators
to heights that are openly unconstitutional.

"After this legislature there followed on
March 21 the ordinary session wherein, one must
admit, the bill on the Organic Budget of the
nation was finally approved, but with a com-
plete absence of technical application and study.
A new bill to rectify its many basic errors is
now being incubated. This project of corrective
legislation is known by the name of 'Table of
Budgetary Errata'.

"We remain at a standstill as regards the
abovementioned Complementary Laws and others -
such as the Administrative Career bill [Civil
Service] which is no longer mentioned. And
when the Congress emerges from its inertia and
approves some law, such as the payments to
veterans, it is only to attach a new 'rider'
thereto, such as the shameful and excessive
increase of senators' salaries. This rider
is repugnant whatever the amount, but its
magnitude fixes a rate, a price, a surprise
tax added to the law notwithstanding the fact
that the law is one whereby the nation proposes
to relieve the penury and economic needs of
the founders of the nation. They have not yet
collected their ever decreasing benefits, but
those other 'Fathers of the Nation' - the ones
under discussion - they do not fail to collect
punctually by means of this 'rider'.

"There is now being perpetrated one of those
legislative tricks that are so productive for its
authors. We refer to the so-called 'tobacco
rider', the suppression of which was approved by
the Chamber and which may also be rectified in
the Senate. In this connection Senator Campaneria
has told the press that the rider in question con-
sisted of a 'murky deal involving a pool of
500,000 pesos'.

"Is it no longer possible to legislate with-
out immediate enrichment? It is a sad truth which
has a precedent as astounding as the impossibility
of enacting a law to assist the victims of a cy-
clone in Las Villas and Camaguey because the groups
of opposing congressmen in previous legislatures
could not agree upon the division of the booty.
It does not matter that the farmers, victims of the

cyclone,

~~00-101040~~

Despatch No. 747
September 29, 1949
Embassy, Habana, Cuba.

- 3 -

cyclone, should be without homes, their crops ruined, without seeds and without food, nor that those farmers should press for some of the immediate help promised them from election-eering platforms. If money, or control of the benefits to be distributed, is not involved, the rest is of no importance.

"Here is the stigma: the mercenary legislative viewpoint - which has honorable exceptions - that paralyzes and enervates constructive action by the Congress. In view of its examples of inertia and of duties repeatedly ignored, the spirit of the journalist does not feel inclined to reach the heights of enthusiasm at the beginning of each legislative session. The one just commenced has not up to the present time developed more auspiciously than those that previously failed. It is necessary to react, to raise the level of integrity at the Capitolio, symbol and mirror of the nation. The great work of world transition, the strengthening of our economy and the defense of our international rights can only be accomplished with high morality and clean hands. It is shameful that in the midst of the great problems awaiting the noble attention of the legislators, they the legislators bribe each other in the enactment of 'riders'.

"Is this a Congress worthy of the name... or is this a Congress of 'riders' and deceit?"

Comment:

The Cuban people probably will continue to venture to hope that there may be some degree of pessimism in the foregoing appraisal of the Cuban Congress. However, in view of the means employed to elect administration members of this Congress in June 1948, and the means that seem to be contemplated to insure the election of administration candidates for Congress in 1950, there has been no basic change in the ethics that gave this Congress the characteristics described by the Diario de la Marina.

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador:


Earl T. Crain
First Secretary of Embassy

ETCrain/dts

RESTRICTED