

# A Letter to Party Leaders in Puerto Rico

## *From English Language Advocates' chairman*

by Leo Sorensen

*[On December 7, 1998, Chairman Leo Sorensen of English Language Advocates (ELA) addressed a letter to party leaders Hon. Pedro Rosello, Governor of the New Progressive Party; Hon. Anibel Acevedo Vilá, President of the Popular Democratic Party; Hon. Ruben Berrios, Senator of the Puerto Rican Independence Party; and Hon. Luis Vega Ramos, Chairman of the Coordinadora Puertorriqueña.]*

Gentlemen:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors and the fifty thousand supporters of English Language Advocates (ELA), a national non-profit organization dedicated to the defense of English as the official language of the United States.

Several representatives of ELA, myself included, have just returned from Puerto Rico where we spent several days observing the plebiscite campaign and meeting with advocates for the various status options offered to the voters on December 13.

We are deeply concerned about the campaign of misinformation that is being conducted by the advocates of Statehood for Puerto Rico, whose advertising boldly and incorrectly assures the voters that the island can become a 51st State without any changes in its language and cultural policies. **THAT ASSERTION IS WRONG.** It is clearly meant to create the illusion that Puerto Ricans can join the Union of States without having to accept the primacy of English in their public life, nor give up some of their cherished symbols of independence from the American nation.

We feel it is our duty to inform our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico that this promise is false. To cast an informed ballot, voters in Puerto Rico should consider these facts:

- There can be no Spanish-speaking State of Puerto

Rico. Statehood implies that English will be the language of state and local governments and of all their branches and subdivisions. English will be the primary language of Puerto Rican schools.

- The State of Puerto Rico will have no separate representation in the Olympics, in international beauty competitions, in the United Nations or any other international body. These functions are the sole prerogative of the United States.
- The people of the United States, through their representatives in the Congress, will withhold membership in the Union of States from any State insisting on language separatism. Mindful of the example of Quebec, mainstream America will defend its traditional language, English, against the dangers inherent in a Spanish-speaking State within the Union.
- There is no trial membership in the United States. The Union is indivisible. Once a State, Puerto Rico can never aspire to any other status.

The movement to defend English against the implantation of rival languages continues to gain momentum and is determined to use its growing strength to bar the entry of Puerto Rico as a quasi-autonomous Spanish-speaking nation within the Union of States.

In view of the long and largely beneficial association between the people of the United States and the people of Puerto Rico, it may be best to avoid the assured embarrassment of Congressional refusal and await a more propitious time — when English fluency has become the rule rather than the exception in Puerto Rico — for formally seeking membership in the Union of States.

(S) LEO SORENSEN, Chairman  
English Language Advocates