

POOL REPORT

DECEMBER 31, 1976

The President arrived at the bottom of the mountain at approximately 2:00 p. m.

Asked why he recommended statehood for Puerto Rico, he replied that "for a good many years I visited Puerto Rico off and on, and I have felt they have made tremendous progress in the political, economic and social" areas. "It seems to me that the people of Puerto Rico had spoken in the last election," when they elected a Governor and Representative to Congress that favored statehood. "It seemed to me that we ought to take an initiative in Washington to indicate our full support for statehood."

He said that he had not personally spoken to the incoming governor of Puerto Rico before announcing his proposal. He said that it seemed to him "an apropos time so no one could accuse me of political motives."

Asked what the chances are that Congress would approve statehood, he said, "We'll have to wait and see." Asked if the Puerto Ricans would approve, he said, there are "pretty good indications they are sympathetic."

Asked why he did wait and let Jimmy Carter move on Puerto Rico, he replied, somewhat testily it seemed to your pool reporter, "I am the President until January 20."

Phil Shabecoff, New York Times

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