

2020 Byrd Center Teacher Institute

Teaching About Congress and the Constitution in Critical Periods of American History

“Crossroads in History:” The Senate Debates the Panama Canal Treaties

Length of Session: 50 minutes

Guiding Question(s): What insights about the Senate’s role in American foreign policy can students gain from studying the Panama Canal Treaty debates of the late 1970s?

What do the Panama Canal Treaty debates reveal about American politics and political culture in the late 1970s/late 20th century?

Topic I: The Senate’s Role In Foreign Policy

1. Article 2 Section 2 of the Constitution:
2. Senator Robert C. Byrd, Speech to Democratic Caucus, Jan. 4, 1977, Robert C. Byrd Congressional Papers Collection.

Topic II: Reimagining American Foreign Policy in the Post-Watergate Post-Vietnam Era

Group I: Revisiting the Push for the Panama Canal, 1903-1914

3. William. Allen Rogers, “Theodore Roosevelt and His Big Stick in the Carribean,” 1904
4. Charles Green Bush, “Go Away Little Man,” 1903
5. Clifford K. Berryman, “An Administrative Elephant,” *Washington Post*, June 25, 1905
6. Clifford K. Berryman, “Open for Business,” *The Evening Star*, August 15, 1914

Group II: Rethinking the Panama Canal Treaty and American Foreign Policy in an Age of Limits

7. James Dent, “SALT,” *Charleston Gazette*, 1979
8. Charles Erkman, “Leading Them to the Water Was the Easy Part, Jimmy” *Charleston Daily Mail*,

Topic III: The Panama Canal Treaties and American Political Culture

9. Constituent Letter to Senator Robert C. Byrd opposing ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties, February 16, 1978
10. Constituent Poem to Senator Robert C. Byrd opposing ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties, 1977-1978
11. Senator Robert C. Byrd, “Questions for General Torrijos,” 1977
12. Robert C. Byrd, “Crossroads in History,” April 17, 1978

Documents:

Document 1: Article II, Section II of the United States Constitution

Full Text of the Constitution is available through the National Constitution Center:

<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/full-text>

Article II, Section 2

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

Document II:

Statement by U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) at the Senate Democratic Conference, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., Tuesday, January 4, 1977.

For Release, Tues., 1/4/77

Gentlemen: You have honored me by selecting me to be the Majority Leader of the Senate for the 95th Congress. I thank you for the faith and confidence you have shown, and I shall, to the utmost of my strength and ability, do my best to justify and sustain your trust. My dedication to the task you have given me will be constant, and it will be total. I trust that God will give me the courage and the wisdom always to act for the highest good of the Senate. You expect no less; you are entitled to no less. The Senate's judgment is not that of one man, but of 100 men, and I ask you, individually and collectively, for your patience and forbearance, your understanding and cooperation -- all of which I shall need in full measure in the weeks and months ahead.

We enter today upon a new era, and we shall face it together. We are in the 201st year of the life of the United States. As members of the 95th Congress, it is our privilege and responsibility to begin our duties as this nation enters its third century. Like the men and women who have preceded us in ninety-four previous Congresses, our task will be to play a major role in shaping the events and decisions that will become indelible parts of American history.

As the Democratic Majority in the United States Senate, we shall find ourselves in a different position from the one in which we have been for the past eight years. We shall no longer be the "loyal opposition."

For the first time in eight years, a President from our Party will be in the White House.

For the first time in eight years, the Party in control of the Legislative Branch will also be in control of the Executive Branch.

For the first time in eight years, the American government will not be a divided government.

In some ways, our task as Senate Democrats will be easier; in some ways, it will be more difficult. Neither the Executive nor the Legislative Branch may longer point to the other and blame a difference of political party for the failure of the government adequately to face up to critical national needs.

As the Senate leader, I shall cooperate to the fullest with the President at all times -- not just because he is a President from our Party but, more importantly, because he is the President of all the people and the leader of the country. I shall remember at all times, however, that, in working with the Chief Executive, my first responsibility will be to represent the United States Senate. You have my assurance that this duty will not be disregarded.

Leadership Statement 1/4/77
speeches

I shall also consider it my duty to work closely with the leadership in the other body and with the Republican leadership in the Senate to expedite the legislative process.

Uppermost, I shall work with you in fulfilling the Senate's proper role in our tripartite system of government. The people have a right to expect a Senate that will meet its constitutional responsibilities in foreign affairs and domestic matters, as fully and objectively under a Democratic President as it would under a Republican.

The 95th Congress will be a busy one. I anticipate that it will be a productive one.

I consider one of our foremost responsibilities to be that of restoring confidence in the Senate as the cornerstone of our constitutional system. There has never been a time when the Senate was not the target of criticism. The present is no exception.

The Senate has defects. Let us correct them with sympathetic hands. It has imperfections. Let us perfect them if we can. Let us stop abusing it and hope that those who, on the outside, seemingly make a pastime of denigrating the Senate, will thereby rethink their judgments of it. All who sit here are sent here by the American people, and every indictment of the Senate is an indictment of the American people.

Three generations ago, Gladstone admiringly called the Senate "that remarkable body, the most remarkable of all the inventions of modern politics." Let us in our day strive to make the Senate worthy of such a characterization.

One of the first orders of business is the Stevenson Resolution which proposes several recommendations calculated to improve the overall efficiency of the Senate in the conduct of its business. Senator Stevenson and his committee are to be commended. They have worked long; they have worked hard. Their recommendations are entitled to prompt and careful consideration by the Senate. There may be Senators who have reservations about certain provisions in the proposal, and perhaps constructive suggestions will be forthcoming. On balance, however, I believe the Stevenson Committee's proposal has much merit, and the Senate ought to work its will thereon.

Moreover, I hope that the Senate will modify its rules to the extent necessary to expedite final action on any measure or matter once cloture has been invoked, without, of course, trampling on the rights of a minority under Rule XXII.

The Senate has twice passed public financial disclosure legislation which failed to become law. I think the Senate has a responsibility to pursue these efforts in this Congress. In my judgment, every officer and employee of the Federal Government -- Executive, Legislative, Judicial and the military -- above a certain specified level of income, ought to be included in such a law.

In addition, there are constructive recommendations proposed by the Hughes Commission which the Senate ought to consider.

As well as these institutional reforms, the Senate will be faced with many other important issues.

Action must be taken to lower unemployment and to stimulate consumer confidence and consumer spending, to encourage business investment, and to increase the production of goods and services so as to reduce inflationary pressures.

A national energy policy must be formulated -- a policy that will provide for energy conservation and for development of new sources and new forms of energy. The security of this nation cannot be guaranteed by a growing dependence on imports of oil from abroad -- imports that have increased from 17 percent of our total consumption three years ago to over 40 percent today, and which are expected to reach 50 percent by 1980 and, perhaps, as early as 1978.

Further steps must be taken toward consideration of a national health policy that will be feasible and within the nation's means to afford. No family should be reduced to paupersim because of catastrophic illness, and no person, however poor, should be forced to bear the pain and suffering of a protracted illness for lack of funds with which to secure necessary surgical and medical care. There must be a way in which this country -- one of the richest and most advanced in the world -- can meet this need.

The reorganization and restructuring of the Executive Branch, to make it more efficient, is a goal to which the new President is committed, and it will be a difficult goal to achieve. The Congress must do its best to help him.

Environmental protection will continue to be of prime importance to the nation, and the 95th Congress should, through active oversight and legislative enactment, promote a balanced approach to the problem.

Tax cuts to stimulate the economy will undoubtedly be a matter for consideration and action in this Congress.

As the Executive and Legislative Branches work together to deal with these and countless other problems, we must keep in mind the President's commitment to balance the budget, if possible, by 1980. This will be no easy task.

Compliance with the strictures and requirements of the Congressional budget reform act will necessitate continuing vigilance and hard work by the budget committees as well as discipline and forbearance on the part of every Senator. In this regard, I must say that the record thus far is one which commends the Congress and its budget committees. It is a continuing responsibility that each of us carries to make the law work. Yet, make it work, we must.

While the main responsibility for foreign policy leadership devolves from the Constitution upon the President himself, the Senate also has a constitutional role which cannot and will not be avoided. It is well to keep in mind, too, that, in the final analysis, the best foreign policy is for us to have a strong and healthy economy here at home.

Since the end of World War II, the shape of the world has changed drastically. Independent nations and governments have been forged from previous colonial possessions with little experience in sophisticated political techniques. Social upheavals and scientific advances have lifted several small nations to positions of international prominence and influence un contemplated but a decade ago. Traditional alliances have deteriorated or collapsed. Presuppositions and axioms that determined relations between countries for generations and even centuries have been called into question.

One of our tasks will be to participate in the determination of the American role in the changing order taking shape throughout the world. The emerging international scene offers opportunities to strengthen American's position in world affairs just as it poses dilemmas for our security.

There is a need for the United States to reaffirm close political, economic, and military relations with our core allies in North America, Western Europe, and Japan, while encouraging our NATO allies to assume a larger share of their conventional defense burden, and working to bring about the inclusion of Spain as a NATO member.

Our triangular relationship with the Soviet Union and China must be handled with constant attention and care, and with a continuing effort toward normalization of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, without undermining our friendly ties with Taiwan.

We must retain a strong defense, and especially must we provide whatever funds are needed for scientific and technological research for defense purposes. At the same time, we must avoid waste and non-essential expenditures in the defense field as well as in all other areas of federal spending.

One of the important issues facing this Congress and this administration will be the problem of nuclear proliferation -- both horizontally among non-nuclear powers, and vertically within existing nuclear powers. Every effort is needed to curb nuclear proliferation in the continuing search for peace.

I mention these areas, not as a complete listing of legislation to be considered by the 95th Congress, but only to recognize the difficult workload ahead of us. It also serves to illustrate that we, as Senate Democrats, have many Congressional initiatives awaiting our action, as well as those we may receive from the President.

The Legislative Branch will continue to fulfill its responsibilities and exercise its rightful powers under our constitutional system of checks and balances. The great object for us to seek here is to make this Senate a strong Senate, and, when the occasion demands, an independent Senate -- not only because it was so intended by the Founding Fathers, but because it is the need for the present that matters.

In the past generation, the American people have confronted problems nationally and internationally that might have destroyed a lesser nation than ours. The wounds of Vietnam and Watergate are now healing. The civil violence and the assassinations of the 1960's have become painful episodes in our national memory. Like all great peoples and civilizations, we have learned and grown through our pain, struggle, and conflict.

Out of this era, I believe that we are emerging with a new sense of what America is and can become. This country -- traditionally the Great Melting Pot -- is still a composite of diverse groups and millions of individuals with both common and conflicting goals and dreams. From this diversity of talents and traditions has come the dynamism of American life.

I believe we face an exciting challenge in the next two years, with a great opportunity to make significant institutional progress and to work legislatively with a President from our Party, who understands the needs and hopes of the people, and recognizes the obstacles which must be overcome to fulfill those needs and hopes. I am confident that the Senate will meet that challenge. In so doing, may we maintain the trust, the honor, and the glory of this country.

Document III: William. Allen Rogers, "Theodore Roosevelt and His Big Stick in the Carribbean," 1904.



Document IV: Charles Green Bush, "Go Away Little Man," 1903



Document V: Clifford K. Berryman, "An Administrative Elephant," *Washington Post*, June 25, 1905



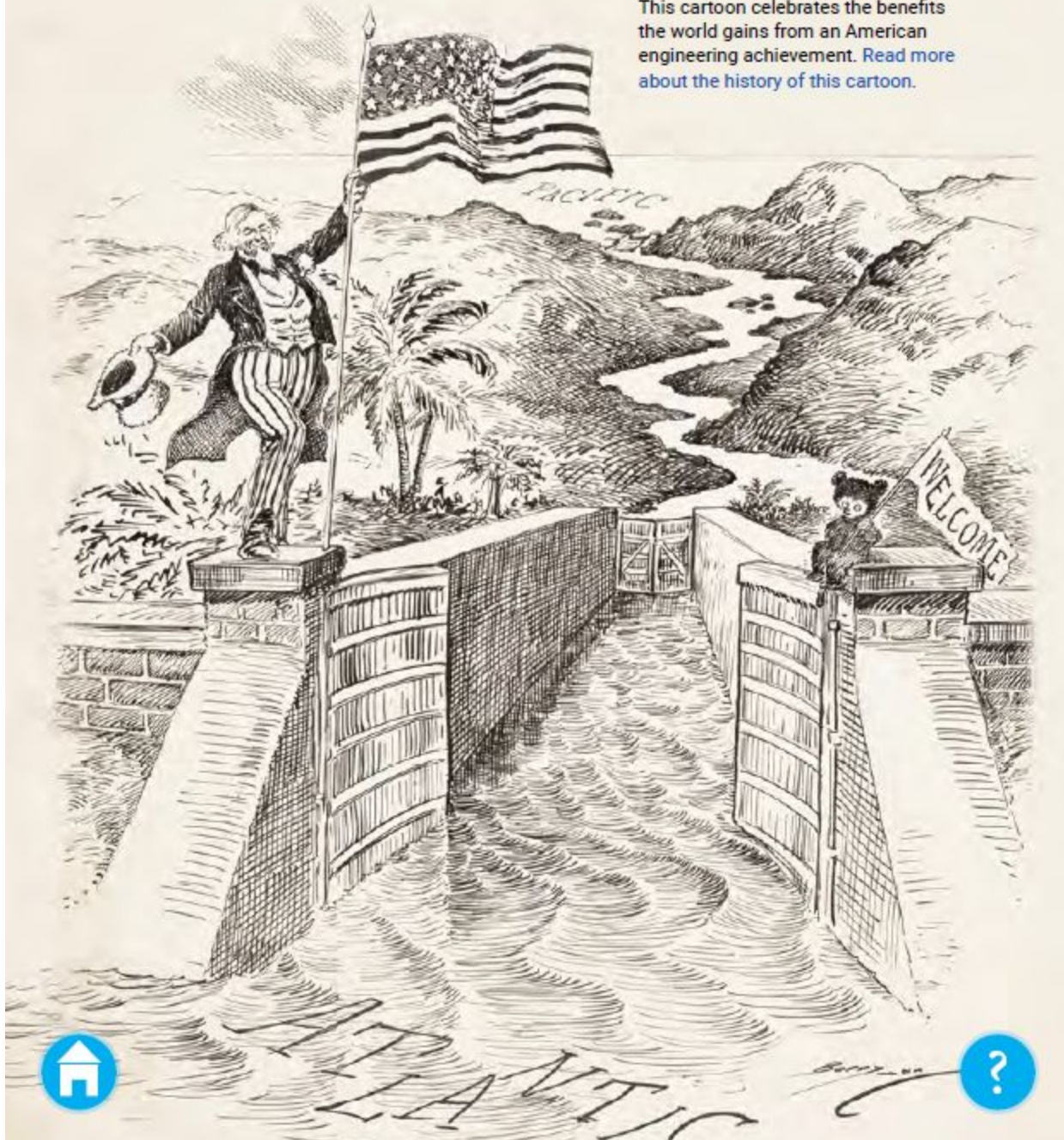
Document VI: Clifford K. Berryman, "Open for Business," *The Evening Star*, August 15, 1914

Cartoon 18

○ "Open for Business"

The Evening Star
August 15, 1914
NAID 6011066

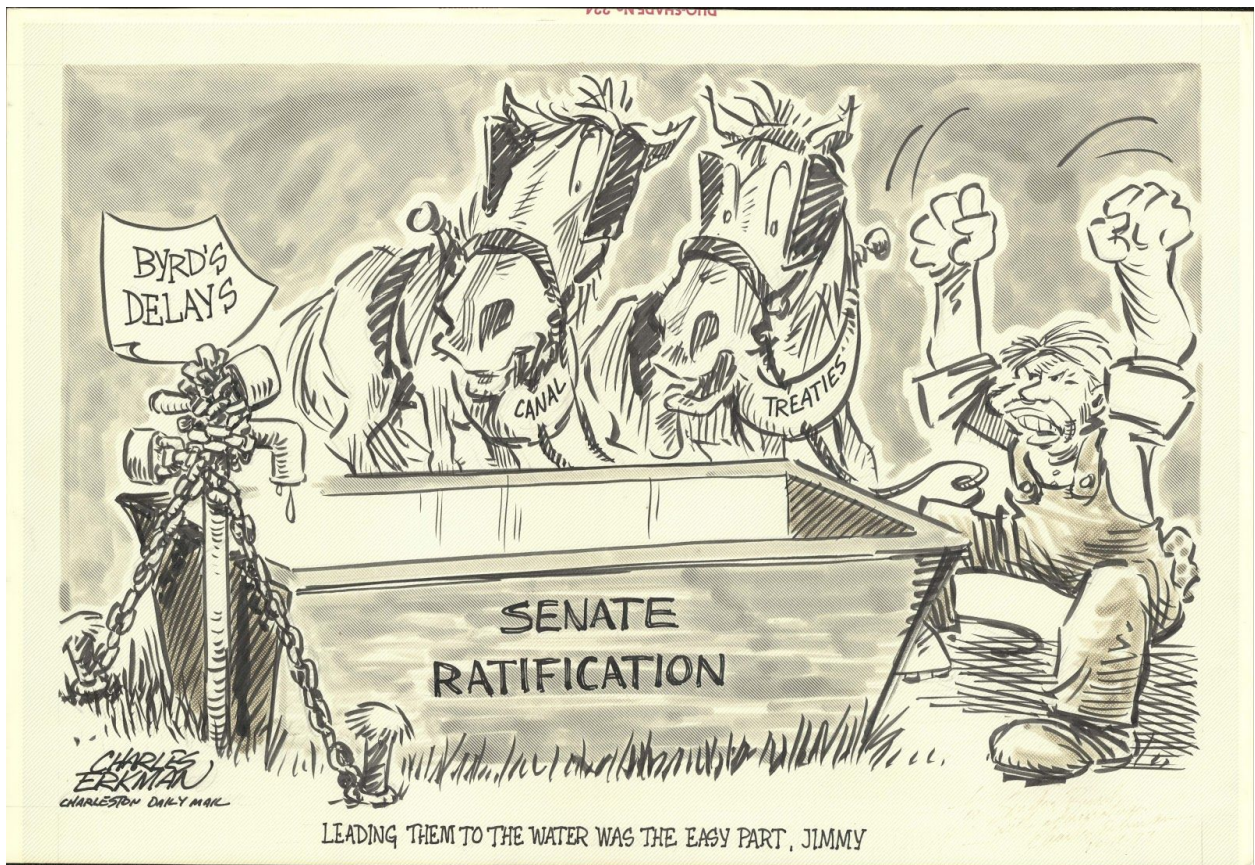
This cartoon celebrates the benefits the world gains from an American engineering achievement. [Read more about the history of this cartoon.](#)



Document VII: James Dent, "SALT," *Charleston Gazette*, 1979



Document VIII: Charles Erkman, "Leading Them to the Water Was the Easy Part, Jimmy"
Charleston Daily Mail,



LEADING THEM TO THE WATER WAS THE EASY PART, JIMMY

Document IX: Constituent Letter to Senator Robert C. Byrd opposing ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties, February 16, 1978



815 Fourth Street
Fairmont, WV 26554
February 16, 1978

Hon. Robert C. Byrd
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

In re: Panama Canal Treaties

Dear Senator Byrd:

It was my pleasure to spend the last week in January in Panama City and the Canal Zone. I felt that I needed first-hand information before I could express a knowledgeable opinion about the Treaties now being debated in the Senate.

I found the Canal Zone and Panama in general to be delightful places to visit. But what thrilled me most was having a ring-side seat on the observation deck where I could see the smooth operations of the Miraflores Locks as huge ships made their transit through that section of the Canal. I saw some people on one of the ships, and waved to them. They waved back.

Another delightful experience was a there-and-back ride on the Panamanian Railroad. Additionally, I rode by automobile to many other places of interest in and out of the Canal Zone, one of these was the crossing of the Thatcher Ferry Bridge, a very important link of the Pan-American highway.

I interviewed the postmaster in Colon, a genial American who was pleased to be able to express his views about the Treaties. I contacted a friend living in Gamboa whose husband is with the dredging team which keeps the Canal bed free of unwanted vegetation which grows rapidly in the tropics. I talked with a Panamanian American whose husband is a pilot whose work is to guide ships safely through the Canal; the wife teaches Spanish to the children in the American schools. I talked with a nurse who had served 27 years in the Gorgas Hospital which is a Military installation in the Canal Zone. She gave us a tour of the hospital. (My daughter, a nurse, was with me.)
At the Administration Building in Balboa Heights, C.Z., we were greeted cordially and given an information packet, including maps, pamphlets, and two magazines which visitors, like ourselves, find extremely helpful in getting an inside look at the Panama Canal and the native Panamanians. Of course, we interviewed the official in charge.

The consensus of all whom we contacted was that we should keep our Canal. The Zonians were apprehensive and fearful about their future since it seemed to them that the President is insensitive to their predicament while urging ratification of the Treaties. Are these dedicated people - some 3,800 - to be turned over to a Communist dictator as though they were cattle going into the custody of a new owner? Before we start pouring millions into the pocket of Torrijos, should we not insure the future of these people in the way of their choice?

Before you cast your vote favoring ratification, Senator, you should take a hard look at the consequences of that action. By so doing, you are betraying our own state of West Virginia. Read pages 590, 597-598 of The Path Between the Seas, by David McCullough.

~~Do you look upon the ratification of these Treaties as a political matter, and that you must "follow the leader" by taking a firm stand in favor of the Treaties? I have no doubt that some members of the Senate take this view. However, ratification of these treaties transcends politics, and would adversely affect all of us, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and people everywhere in every nation who love freedom.~~

Furthermore, ratification would mark the beginning of the end of democracy in America and would dim the hopes of millions of people living under the tyranny of Communism, that they would ever again enjoy the blessings of a free society.

And finally, you must know that strategic waterways have always been coveted by conquering nations. In our case, the person, or country, that controls the Panama Canal controls the Western Hemisphere. No other country on earth would be so rash as to do what we are so happily contemplating. Can you not see the shadow of the Kremlin hovering over our Canal? I can.

Sincerely yours,

Document X: Constituent Poem to Senator Robert C. Byrd opposing ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties, 1977-1978.

ATTENTION THE PANAMA CANAL
Like Jonah in the belly of the whale
The Panama Canal is being tossed about,
We Americans can keep her
Or vomit her out
Into the waiting, willing hands of the
= Communists =
They lurk in the shadows of their
brain washed lands
And teach their students
Right here in AMERICA!
What fools are we
If we cannot see
Their Center for Marxist Education
156 Fifth Avenue in New York City.
This way of living is not for me
I am a proud and loyal American.
I pray, Dear God I pray
America, Americans will always be free.

QUESTIONS FOR GENERAL TORRIJOS

1. What will be your GOVERNMENT'S attitude and conduct in regard to the treatment of the Zonians, particularly in matters of police protection, judicial action, and employment rights; if the treaties are ratified?
2. What are your current and prospective relations with Cuba and do you feel that the Cuban political and economic system has any applicability for Panama?
3. What are Panama's current and prospective relations with the Soviet Union?
4. What can we expect in regard to the evolution of the political system in Panama? We are interested in knowing what your plans might be for 1978, when your current term expires.
5. Human rights are a matter of great concern IN OUR COUNTRY. WE UNDERSTAND you have invited a delegation from the Organization of American States to observe human rights conditions here. Would you comment on this issue?
6. Drug trafficking is a matter of major concern in the United States. What is your attitude and your government's attitude about this problem?
7. Considering the importance of the statement of understanding made by you and President Carter, do you believe this is adequately understood by the Panamanian people and do you continue to stand behind the statement?

(2) Questions

8. Do you believe the memorandum of understanding could be attached to the treaty in some form? (What about other possible reservations or understandings?)

9. What about the timing of Senate consideration of the treaties? What would be the impact in Panama of delayed consideration?

10. How would you envision utilizing the proposed \$50 million in military assistance?

11. How will ratification of the treaties affect the Panamanian economy?

12. What is your feeling in regard to the possible construction of a sea-level canal?

¹ *Ibid.*, II, 129-134.

² *Ibid.*, IV, 37-51, cap. 39, 43-48.

³ *Ibid.*, II, 177-189, cap. 181-183, 185-187.

⁴ U.S. Constitution, art. I, secs. 9 and 10.

⁵ Farrand, II, 321, 324.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 459, 468.

CROSSROADS IN HISTORY

Mr. ROBERT C. BYRD. Mr. President, we stand at a crossroads in history—not just the epic history of the Panama Canal, but the history of the U.S. Senate and the two nations which are the parties to these treaties. Approval of these treaties would be another step in America's proud history of world leadership, a proud moment for the Senate, for our country, and for Panama.

Rejection of these treaties would be contrary to our national principles and purpose, and would damage and undermine Panamanian national dignity.

Today marks the 37th day of debate in the Senate on the treaties. The debate which began here on February 8 was preceded by lengthy hearings by the Committee on Foreign Relations and additional hearings by other committees.

Further, many Members of the Senate visited Panama in order to become better informed about the issues involved in the treaties.

The debate in the Senate has been one of the lengthiest and most thorough in history. In Senate consideration of treaties, only the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and 1920 consumed more time. This debate has also been historic in that, for the first time, the Senate's proceedings have been broadcast across the Nation by national public radio.

Prior to and during the debate on the treaties, serious and legitimate concerns have been raised about their content and meaning. We have attempted to deal with these concerns through amendments to the treaties and to the resolutions of ratification. This is totally consistent with the Senate's constitutional role and our responsibility to insure that the treaties are in the best interests of the United States.

That, in the final analysis, will be the basis for each Senator's decision—whether, in that Senator's perception, the treaties are in our best interests.

NATIONAL INTEREST

As Benjamin Franklin wrote long ago: There is no science, the study of which is more useful and commendable than the knowledge of the true interest of one's country.

In describing the treaties as being in our best national interests, I am talking about a time-honored concept in American foreign policy. It was Franklin, our first Ambassador and one of our earliest statesmen, who said that our foreign policy should be based on the principles of mutuality and equity.

It is a matter of determining our mutual interests with other nations and acting together to protect those interests. This is what has sometimes been referred to as enlightened self-interest. As Franklin said, "In every fair connection, each party should find its own interest."

Those are the principles upon which

this treaty, and the Neutrality Treaty, are based—mutuality and equity. These are sound principles, in the best American tradition; they represent the best interests of the United States and are the best means of assuring that the Panama Canal will continue to serve the nations of the world.

Under this treaty Panama would have an increased stake in the canal and in its efficient and unimpeded operation. However, the United States would retain a high degree of control over the canal through 1999, plus defense rights thereafter, as provided under the Neutrality Treaty. Thus, these two treaties will fully protect U.S. interests for both the near and the more distant future.

There has been a tendency by some to overlook this and to overlook the fact that treaties are between sovereign powers, not between individuals. Thomas Jefferson spoke to this point in 1793 when a treaty the United States had signed with France in 1778 was questioned. That treaty had been negotiated with the French monarchy under Louis XVI. Subsequently, of course, the monarchy and Louis XVI were replaced. Jefferson said:

... The treaties between the United States and France were not treaties between the United States and Louis Capet (Louis XVI), but between the two nations of America and France; and the nations remaining in existence, though both of them have since changed their forms of government, the treaties are not annulled by these changes.

We would all do well to keep in mind Thomas Jefferson's point: Treaties are between nations. This is the case regardless of changes in the individual leadership. It should also be remembered that throughout the 75 years of our treaty relationship, the Panamanians, despite longstanding resentment in Panama of the 1903 treaty, have consistently honored it.

PANAMA

Let me turn for a moment to the Panamanians. In this lengthy and wide-ranging debate, numerous comments have been made about Panama, Panamanian history, the Panamanian people, and their government.

Panama, unlike our own richly endowed Nation, is not blessed with great natural resources. Its greatest assets are its people and its geographic location—the isthmus through which the world's two largest bodies of water have been linked.

A translated version of some of our debate has been broadcast on Panamanian radio and there has been extensive coverage in the Panamanian press. The canal is, of course, a matter of vital importance to Panama: it is the very lifeblood of that country. It is a subject about which Panamanians have felt strongly for decades. The Panamanians have taken understandable offense at some of the remarks made here, and some, I fear, have been misinterpreted or misunderstood.

I believe the Panamanians have exercised remarkable restraint, and want to commend them for maintaining their equanimity in this situation. The American people know, and I hope the people of the world understand that, in the tradition of the Senate, our debate has been

free, open, and unrestrained. This is the genius of our system, which presumes that no individual, no group or party has sole access to the truth. Rather, through debate and argument, through the competition of ideas, we hope to arrive at a decision which serves the principles and the interests of this country. But when the vote is taken, when the decision has been made, we present to the world an undivided front; we speak with one voice abroad, although at home—before the time for decision—we not only tolerate but also encourage the free expression of differences.

INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

In addition to the intense interest in Panama, these treaties are viewed throughout Latin America as matters of great importance, and as symbolic of the United States' attitude toward its neighbors. The Senate's vote on this treaty may well determine the course of United States-Latin American relations for decades to come. Approval of these treaties is critical to our future relationships with the rapidly developing Latin American countries—countries whose destinies are closely intertwined with our own.

Furthermore, implementation of these treaties would be consistent with our role as a world leader. These treaties are evidence of wise and judicious use of power, of an attitude of compassion and cooperation, by the most powerful nation in the world.

Thus, the treaties not only serve our own world interests, but they also serve the interests of the rest of the world. A bilateral treaty, such as the one before us, attempts to reconcile the interests of both nations, as I believe this one does. However, these treaties serve the interests not only of Panama and the United States, but also of all the other nations of the world.

Let us not forget that the Panama Canal is an international canal—open to all nations. Construction of such an international canal was the goal of the original Senate resolution of 1825, requesting President Andrew Jackson to negotiate with nations of Central America for the purpose of opening "a communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, by the construction of a ship canal across the isthmus which connects North and South America, and of securing forever * * * the free and equal right of navigating such canal to all such nations, on the payment of such reasonable tolls as may be established."

This is the purpose of the Panama Canal. This was the motivation for that monumental effort to construct the canal. This is the purpose of these treaties: an international waterway open to peaceful transit by the vessels of all nations. And the actions taken by the Senate to improve the treaty have been with that same purpose in mind. Our actions have been directed at assuring that the canal will remain open, secure, and accessible. It is the canal, not the internal affairs of Panama, which is our concern.

These treaties are evidence of a maturing partnership, a constructive part-

nership, a relationship based on mutual-ity and equity. These treaties reflect the world of today and tomorrow—not the world of yesterday. We have an opportunity to show wisdom and foresight, to exercise forward-looking leadership. We must consider the needs of future generations.

It is a time for vision—a time for courage.

No matter how long one may serve in the Senate, there are few rollcalls that have greater portent than that which will occur tomorrow. Both the short- and long-term consequences of our actions will have momentous impact. It is not an overstatement, it is not an overdramatization to say that our action tomorrow may well influence the course of world affairs for years, indeed, for generations.

We are at a crossroads. We face a critical decision. I am hopeful that the Senate will choose the road that will bring credit and honor to this body and to this country. Approval of this treaty will be a proud moment for us, for our Nation, and for Panama.

Mr. President, I yield back such time as I may not have consumed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. BAKER) is recognized as in legislative session for not to exceed 15 minutes.

Mr. DANFORTH. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the Senator from Tennessee has yielded that time to me.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, then, the Senator from Missouri is recognized for 15 minutes.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Mr. DANFORTH. Mr. President, I wish to address some attention today to one of the most frequently heard comments I have received from my constituents about the Panama Canal treaties. Repeatedly, people have said to me something on the following order:

We do not mind giving Panama our canal, but why do we have to pay them to take it from us?

As a matter of fact, a radio commercial which was run in my State put the point this way:

If you agree with Senator Danforth and Jimmy Carter that we should pay Panama billions of dollars to take our canal, that is your privilege.

That is the point that I would like to address myself to today, because, in point of fact, that is not correct. Under the treaties, we are not paying Panama any money at all to take the Panama Canal, much less billions of dollars. As a matter of fact, under the existing treaty, the 1903 treaty, the United States is obligated to pay out of its Treasury to the Republic of Panama \$2.3 million a year. That would be \$50.6 million between now and the year 2000, that we, the American people, are obligated out of our Treasury to pay the Republic of Panama between now and the year 2000.