P.S. to the NEWS
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THE 51st STATE

In 1959, the United States admitted Alaska and Hawaii as the 49th and 50th states of the Union, thus overriding the sincere misgivings of some people who worried about the precedent of admitting non-contiguous territories. Today, the value of Alaska and Hawaii is generally recognized, and most people are glad they are part of the United States.

The time has now come to admit the 51st state into the Union, and it should be the U.S. Canal Zone. There are many good reasons why this would be just as progressive and worthwhile a step.

First, it would be a matter of simple justice for the 38,000 American citizens who live in the Canal Zone under the continual threat of hostile action by Panama. At present, these American citizens have neither self-government nor representation in the U.S. Congress.

Second, admitting the U.S. Canal Zone as a state would guarantee that the Panama Canal will be protected as an essential lifeline of our military and economic security. It would free us from the threats of Panamanian dictators and the meddling of the United Nations.

Third, admitting the Canal Zone would improve international relations by serving notice on the world that the Panama Canal will remain open at reasonable charges to all nations, and that we will never permit the Panama Canal to go the way of the Suez Canal, which was closed to the world by the arbitrary action of the local dictator. If the Canal Zone were the 51st state, it could never be confiscated by a Panamanian dictator and then operated for the benefit of nations hostile to the United States.

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Fourth, by admitting the Canal Zone as the 51st state, we would make sure that we would never be cheated out of the $10 million we paid Panama for the Canal Zone, the $25 million we paid Columbia for the Canal Zone, the millions we paid to private owners to purchase the land, and the more than $5 billion we have spent during the last 60 years to build the Canal and its defenses.

One of the principal builders of the Panama Canal was one of the most distinguished and successful businessmen of the 20th century: the late General Robert E. Wood. He was the genius who built Sears, Roebuck and Company from an annual volume of $199 million to more than $3 billion, from a mail-order house to one of the largest businesses in America. As a young graduate of West Point, Robert E. Wood went to Panama and became one of the key engineers who built the Canal. He used to tell his friends:

"The United States has created all of the wealth that exists in Panama. American money and brains were responsible for the building and operation of the Canal. ... The Canal is vital to our defense. If we concede any of our rights there, we are finished."

For every reason -- moral, military, economic, and financial -- plus our own self-respect and fair treatment of U.S. citizens in the Canal Zone, it makes sense to admit the U.S. Canal Zone as the 51st state.

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