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TH.ltL.ATS ABOUT THE U.S. CANAL

The Ford Administration has apparently made a calculated decision that the way to get the American people to acquiesce in Henry Kissinger's plan to sign a new treaty with Panama giving away the U.S. Canal i to threaten the American people with dire consequences as the alternative. After Ronald Reagan made the Canal giveaway proposal an issue in the Texas primary, Ron Nessen was assigned to make the ite House reply. He conjured up the bogey man of "violence and civil disturbances" in Panaria and said that "rtots and bloodshed wouln occur tf we break off treaty negotiations."

Is Mr. Nessen expressing a lack of Ad.ministration faith in American military capability to defend our own property against a tin-horn pro-Communist <"emegogue and his rock-throwing mob? '1hat woulct be unthinkable. Or is Mr. Nessen expressing a lack of feith in the /merican will to defend our national interests after our humiliating retreat from South Vietnam? If so, he has misjudge the !merican people. The same people who were fed up with the no-win war in Vietrnnn Rre eager to defend the U.S. Canel with all necessary militRry action.

M:r. Nessen Is scare talk follo"t•.rea a recent "b ckground" interview given by a high Ford .Administrntion official the gi!"Jt of which was that, since Castro has 13,000 trained troops soon to return from their victory in .Angola, anti ·they might stir up trouble for us at the U.S. f!anal in Panama, it therefore 'behoov(,s the United States to hurry up and sign a new treaty with the Panamanian dictator giving away American rights to our Canal, in order to avoid having to defend it with military force.

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Ron Nessen also said that relinquishing control of our Canal to ,n:U1· ::ir, ,::,:f'fcrs the best ,guarantee that it will cont inn£ to ·he "open to all.,, Such a statement is an insult to our intelligence. The U.S. Canal has been open to all for 62 years under the protection of the fmeric,,n "'•!avy· :nv! Arny, and there is no doubt tbat tt wiJ1 alwnys be open so long l:, we are :i.r control. Hut if Ce.stra's :frienJ., OmPr 'fc;rrijos, were in control, there is no more assurance that it would be open to all than the Suez was open to all under Nasser.

Monald Reagan has rendered a service to our country by bringing thr tf.Q. renal ivP wny out into the open so that the merican eople will knoY whet their diplomats hPVe been doing behin cloRed doors• Only a handful of Americans had been aware that Henry Kissinger went to Panama on Feb. 7, 1974 and signed a preliminary giveaway agreement. One would think that a move of such great importance would require the .'\cllninistration to level with the '.mericlUl voters. But:mention of the anal pivc,w y prnposrJ was conspicuous by its absence from Pre irlent Ford's 1976 State of the Union Message to Congress.

The next time Dr. Kissinger has a prose conference, it would be appropriate to ask him: Just how, Dr. Kissinger, were you planning on circw.tventint .11.rticie IV, .;ect.iou *j oi* the L.;•• 81.:nu i:.i tu.L:...0.n 1.1hich clearly states that only "Congress shall have the powtr to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory o:r other property belonging to the United States *n•1* A treaty requires ,.ruiy ,:...,ena te approval, but n ,:H.1.lTtiU,H:..1. of U.S. territory, such as the Canal, requires both Senate and House approval.

If the United States will not defend our own U.S. Canal, a vital lifeline for Western Hemispheric defense and economic prosperity, the Soviets and their allies in Cuba may be encouraged to conclude that we will not fight to defend Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, or even /,laska.

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