P.S. to the NEWS
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PANAMA TREATY

This month was the Tenth Anniversary of the 1964 riots at the Panana Canal in which three American soldiers were killed. Our State Department thinks that a good way to observe such an anniversary is to give more concessions to the rioters. That is exactly what happened when roving Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker agreed on January 9 to eventually end American jurisdiction over the Panama Canal. No date was set for the transfer of the Canal to Panama, but the Bunker agreement was described as a major step toward this objective, which the State Department and the UN have been conniving to achieve for several years.

Congressman Daniel Flood immediately labeled this Bunker agreement as "merely another incident in a program to surrender the Canal Zone that has not been authorized by the Congress, and which constitutes one of the most disgraceful diplomatic episodes in the history of the United States."

The day Ellsworth Bunker arrived in Panama, the present dictator Omar Torrijos, hurled this insulting language: "If negotiations fail, we have no other recourse but to fight. ... This is the last opportunity. This will be the last peaceful negotiations. ... If we fail this time, we are not responsible for the consequences. The people are losing their patience and the arrival of Bunker is their last hope. It depends on him whether or not the time bomb that is the Canal Zone explodes."

Ambassador Bunker should have taken the next plane back to Washington. Instead, he stayed and caved in to the threats of the Pana-

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manian dictator. The history of our relationship with Panama proves that, when we give in to their blackmail, extortion and violence, it only encourages more of the same.

Panama's impudent demands to acquire U.S. property are developing into a major headache for Secretary of State Kissinger when he meets Latin American foreign ministers in Mexico in February to launch what he has called a "near relationship" with the Western Hemisphere nations. Panama is already one of the eight main points on the agenda, a concession we agreed on in November 1973 at a preparatory meeting of the Latin American foreign ministers in Columbia.

Congressman Flood, Senator Strom Thurmond, Congressman Philip Crane, and most experts on Panama in the Congress believe that the time has come for extensive remodeling of the Canal. Under the Flood-Thurmond-Crane bill, the capacity of the Panama Canal would be more than doubled in terms of annual ship transits -- from 15,000 to 30,000. This is considered sufficient to meet traffic demands for at least the next 50 years. The estimated cost of the project is less than one-fourth the cost of a new sea-level canal, which they deem needlessly expensive, diplomatically hazardous, ecologically dangerous, and liable to the control of foreign governments.

If the Nixon Administration presses for finalization of the ill-conceived Bunker treaty, it will be heading for another confrontation with Congress. There are few issues on which the Congress has shown such bi-partisan unanimity as the issue of the Panama Canal.

The large majority of our Congressmen know that the U.S. Canal Zone is just as much American territory as the other lands we purchased, such as Alaska, Arizona, and the states which were carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. It is the duty of our diplomats to defend American interests and property, such as the U.S. Canal Zone which we bought and for which we have generously paid.

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