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POLITICAL FALLOUT OF THE PANAMA CANAL VOTE

Comnentators described the Senate ratification of the Panama Canal Neutrality Trea'ty as a big victory for President Carter, a "breakthrough" that gave the White House reascn to celebrate. The photographs of a jubilant President showed that he agrees with this verdict.

President Carter had staked his personal prestige on the Treaty and it carried by only one vot to spare. The vote was certainly a victory for the Treaty. The question is, was it a victory for President Carter?

He succeeded in forcing the Treaty on the American people, but he failed to convince them that it was the wise or right thing to do. He succeeded in inducing enough Senators to vote aye, but it was not the merits of the Treaty that persuaded them.

The final ratification votes were obtained by promises to grant or withhold· Federal spending for agricultural and copper prices and by promises to give some Senators an easy ride to re-election by making sure that no formidable candidate files against th m this year.

Senator Bob Packwood brought out into the open charges that the treJty was "bought" when he revealed the President's promises of Administration dec1sions for copper stockpiling and for farm supports.

Commentators say that the ratification of the Treaty was a "symbolic triumph" that "significantly strengthened" President Carter's prestige abroad. B t the tradeoff may be to diminish his popularity at home. Was it worth it?

Press comnent states that the President would have been "crippled" in dealing with Latin America and Moscow if the Treaty had been rejected. But it is probable that the way ratification was achieved has crippled the President

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in his future dealings with Congress.

White House aides are hoping that the Treaty ratification will produce the "turrf"'around" in Carter's pub1i c image that he has been se_eki ng in order to pull his Administration out of stalled negotiations on his energy package, the Middle East problem, the coal strike, and SALT II. But inducing Senators to vote against their conscience or their constituents, or both, hardly builds good will that will facilitate passage of other Administration proposals.

On the morning of the vote on March 16, Senator Wendell Ford aptly pointed out that all the emphasis seemed to be on making the Treaty terms acceptable to dictator Torrijos instead of making the terms acceptable to the American people.

This strange misplaced concern was confirmed that night when the White House revealed its "concern" about Torrijos' reaction to the DeConcini reservation added by the Senate. No concern was expressed by the White House about the American people's reaction at being forced to give away a great national treasure they didn't want to surrender.

This concern to protect Torrijos is further evidenced by the Carter coverup of the heroin-peddling activities of the Torrijos family. The censoring iand the shredding of Drug Enforcement Administration documents makes the Watergate coverup look pale by comparison.

A Pyrrhk victory is one which is too costly. It dates back to 279 ,S.C. when General Pyrrhus won a costly victory over the Romans. When President Ca ter calls for ratification of the second Panama Canal Treaty surrendering all our rights in the Canal and Zone, he may, like General Pyrrhus, be defeated by his too costly victory on March 16.

The Neutrality Treaty approved by the Senate contained only 20 paragraphs, all on one large page. The Panama Canal Treaty now being debated by the Senate contains 31 large pages which minutely describe the billions ot dollars of property the United States will surrender to dictator Torrijos if the Treaty is ratified.

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