

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

September 23, 1977

Mr. Bartram D. Lewis
24 Oakdale Boulevard
Pleasant Ridge, Michigan 48069

Dear Mr. Lewis:

There's not much time left.

Unless you and I act fast, the Administration's treaty to surrender our control over the Panama Canal will be ratified by the U. S. Senate.

And America's most vital shipping and defense waterway will be in the hands of the dictator of Panama, General Torrijos.

This Treaty is being marketed by the Administration as a "23-year" transition document, with the superficial implication the United States will maintain principal control over the Canal Zone and canal until the year 2000. In fact, a careful reading of the Treaty provisions suggests that this concept is false. In effect, this is not a 23-year transition treaty; it is a 30-month title of transfer.

Can you imagine the scene in Panama if the pro-treaty forces in the Senate get their way? Thousands of Panamanian leftists will celebrate their victory over the United States by tearing down every American flag in sight.

And under this treaty they can get away with it. It says, in black and white, that no American flag can be flown in Panama except inside our own military buildings.

What it comes down to is this: a left-wing revolutionary head of Panama, who has crushed the rights of his own people, is now telling the U.S. to "get lost" and give him the Canal that we bought and paid for.

The people of the United States owe Panama no apologies for our involvement with the Canal. The generosity of our government in building the canal, in operating and maintaining it for 65 years, and in thereby improving the standard of living for Panamanians, requires no remorse on our part.

So if this treaty is rammed through the U. S. Senate in its present form, it'll just prove one thing: that the American people can be kicked around and won't do a thing to stop it. And it'll prove to the world that the U.S. has turned into a real paper tiger.

Well I, for one, don't think we can afford to let that happen. In short, a lot more is at stake here than who controls the Panama Canal. What's at stake is our national security and our commitment to our national interest.

If we roll over and play dead on the surrender of all our rights in the Panama Canal, who knows where it will stop.

What will we be forced to give up next: Relations with Taiwan? Our troops in Western Europe? Or worse, what happens if Torrijos, a close personal friend of Fidel Castro's, suddenly decides to close the Canal as Nasser did with the Suez Canal back in 1967?

So, you see there is a lot more to this fight than meets the eye. You and I and all Americans are being told to give up something for nothing.

Why should we risk national security and the safe passage of our ships for the sake of appeasing Torrijos?

Now President Carter and the liberal Democrat leadership are engaged in an all-out, no holds-barred campaign of arm-twisting and pressure tactics to ram the treaty through the Senate.

Why? Because Mr. Carter wants to score a dazzling political triumph. But I'm personally convinced that a total surrender of the Canal has all the potential for a future disaster for our country.

Whether the Senate will cave in to President Carter depends, to a great degree, on what you and other patriotic Americans I'm writing today will do about it.

So, please don't put my letter aside to read later. Later may be too late. That's why I'm counting on your immediate help in our fight to keep our control over the Canal.

Here's what I'd like you to do. First of all, telephone your U.S. Senators and tell them that you are opposed to a give-away of the Panama Canal.

Second, use the two postcards I've enclosed for you to cast your vote in the National Referendum on the Panama Canal Giveaway. Then mail these cards right away to the two U.S. Senators from your state.

And then, send the most generous contribution that you can afford to the NATIONAL FUND TO SAVE OUR PANAMA CANAL.

This national fund has been established by the Young Republican National Federation, an official arm of the Republican National Committee.

The Republican Party must be united on this vital issue. The Young Republicans were the first national Republican group to come out strongly against a Panama Canal surrender.

The Y.R.N.F. is spearheading a nationwide campaign, along with other groups, to save the Canal and deal a crushing defeat to the liberal Democrats who control the Senate.

The Young Republicans hope to generate one million letters, telephone calls and post cards to members of the U.S. Senate within the next 30 days to dramatically prove that Americans across the country are totally opposed to the present treaty proposals.

We must raise a minimum of \$250,000 to launch this massive grassroots campaign. It will take that amount to write to thousands of Americans in every state to alert them to the dangers of a giveaway and mobilize public action against, prior to the Senate vote on the treaty.

The repercussions of this proposed treaty are enormous in terms of our national defense, commercial shipping, our economy and the U.S. image abroad.

Here is what four former Chiefs of Naval Operations have said in a letter to President Carter:

"Loss of the Panama Canal would contribute to the encirclement of the U. S. by hostile naval forces and threaten our ability to survive."

The Canal is also critical to our economy. We need it to ship Alaskan oil to heat American homes. Not to mention the higher prices you'll have to pay for other items shipped through the Canal once it's under Panamanian control.

And then there is the U. S. image abroad.

First it was the Vietnam disaster in 1975. Then the Carter Administration decided to pull U. S. troops out of South Korea and cut back our defense budget.

Next the Carter Administration moved rapidly to "normalize" relations with Castro and Communist Cuba while, at the same time, working towards an end to diplomatic relations with our ally, the Republic of China on Taiwan.

When will these dangerous policies stop?

For an Administration which has made the subject of human rights a basic element of its foreign policy, particularly towards Latin America, the White House has been silent on the issue with respect to the Panama Canal negotiations. Yet, I believe this is an issue that should not be ignored. In the interest of moral principle, as well as consistent policy, it is important that we address the subject of human rights observance within Panama for both Panamanian and U.S. citizens.

I'm convinced our enemies will see the U. S. ratification of the present Canal treaty as further evidence of the decline of America as a world power. And our friends will see it as a dangerous sign of weakness.

I think the American people are sick and tired of this retreat. It's time you and I draw the line and say, "No more".

I honestly believe that it is not in the best interest of our country to allow principal control of this vital Canal to be turned over to Torrijos. There's nothing to be gained and everything to lose.

But the only way we can stop it is with your immediate help and support.

So, please contact your Senators immediately by telephone, telegram or letter. Tell them you don't want the Canal given away today, tomorrow or ever!

And, most important of all, mail your Referendum postcards and send the most generous contribution you can to help us write and alert tens of thousands more Americans.

Whether you can afford a \$10 contribution or a \$500 contribution, I strongly urge you to mail it to me today in the special reply envelope I've enclosed for you.

I and many of my Senate colleagues are counting on your strong financial support today.

So, much depends on you. If you can't help with a contribution for the Young Republican's Fund to Save Our Panama Canal, there just won't be time to contact someone else for help.

The vote to ratify the treaty could come up at any time in the Senate. So please let me hear from you today, if possible.

Sincerely yours,

BOB DOLE
United States Senate