

**Benjamin L. Hooks**



By the time you read this, President Carter will have signed the historic and controversial Panama Canal Treaty. This will signal a new United States Good Neighbor Policy toward our friends in the American Southern Hemisphere and usher in an era of inter-American progress, cooperation and 20th Century common sense.

It will also as it has done since last year when serious negotiations over a new treaty between ourselves and the Panamanian government began, arouse vehement right wing opposition to the congressional ratification of the pact.

It is not coincidental that much of the opposition to the treaty comes from many of the same people who have, historically, opposed civil and human rights. For much of the Panama Canal history began in 19th Century duplicity, sleazy politics, racism and gunboat diplomacy. It is ending in a cacaphonic chorus of reactionary yelps, strident cries from the right about "canal giveaway," hopeful sighs of thanksgiving from others and yawning indifference of many Americans.

What, then, should be the attitude of black and other minority folks, poor folks and women to this overriding issue? To make a balanced judgement one needs first to refresh himself or herself on the history of the Canal.

It began in the early 16th Century when Spanish explorers discovered the slender isthmus bridge between the two Americas. Balboa, whose name the Panamanian currency bears, discovered the Pacific Ocean in 1513, six years before the original Panama City was founded (David McCullough: The Path Between The Seas).

In 1890 Ferdinand de Lesseps, fresh from performing the miraculous engineering feat of building the Suez Canal, launched a drive to build a similar canal in Panama. He sought U.S. help, received little of substance, but went ahead anyway.

His venture ended 10 years later in frustration and disaster and in 1904 the U.S., with President Theodore Roosevelt as aggressive quarterback, bought out the French interest and took over the project on its own. It was successfully completed in 1914 on the eve of World War I.

Historians area agreed, generally, that we urged Panama then an important province of Colombia to revolt and while the new nation was still weak and uncertain, forced an unfavorable one-sided treaty on it.

From the start racism of the rankest kind was part of the package. Panama, an old Cueva Indian word meaning "a place where many fishes are taken," was a hostile tropical environment where tuberculosis, smallpox, cholera, yellow fever, malaria, berbery, sunstroke, dysentery, swarms of mean biting ants, nasty ticks and blood leeches abounded.

But most important were the swarms of mosquitoes bearing the dread yellow and malaria fever. There was a cure then for malaria -- quinine -- none for yellow fever which took thousands of lives, most of them black. It was though blacks living in the tropics were more immune to the fever. It was a racist miscalculation.

At any rate thousands of blacks from the Caribbean and Jamaica were recruited. They did the heavy work in building the canal. They live in miserable hovels, while white workers live in relatively clean and comfortable cottages. The pay differential was particularly odious. Whites were paid relatively good wages, blacks comparatively poor wages.

The wage scale was a double standard: gold (the best) for whites, silver, for blacks. This lasted from the turn of the century until the Martin Luther King, Jr. movement helped once again focus national attention on the outrage. Chauvinism, jingoism, racism were all a part of our national involvement with

Panama from the beginning to this very day.

To blacks, other minorities, the poor and women, ending our shameful control of a slice of property that demonstrably belongs to another nation is a worthy issue to be supported wholeheartedly. For our foreign policy cannot, as Martin Luther King, Jr., said of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, be one thing abroad and another at home.

U.S. Sen. S. I. Hayakawa (R. Calif.) says with pointed wit: "It's our canal. We stole it fair and square." It is time we returned this canal. For it not only no longer serves the practical purpose of furnishing a two ocean navy (many U.S. warships simply are too large to pass through it) it worsens relations with Latin Americans with whom we should be effecting Christian brotherhood and solidarity.

**- Centel**

Beginning October 1, telephone customers calling Central Telephone Company's directory assistance operators will hear a 10-second recorded message reminding them that the best way to obtain a telephone number is by using the telephone directory.

The short message is aimed at reducing the number of unnecessary calls to directory assistance. After completion of the message, a directory assistance operator will come on the line to assist the customer.

In discussing the new procedure, Centel Nevada Division Traffic Manager Ed Brandes said that by using the telephone directory, telephone customers can assist the company in keeping the cost of providing directory assistance service from increasing at the rapid pace noted in recent years.

Brandes said the cost of directory assistance has risen 55 per cent during the last five years, while calling volume has increased 37 per cent. Studies have shown that nine out of ten requests are for numbers which are in the current directory and that approximately 85 per cent of the calls to directory assistance are made by about 15 per cent of the company's customers.

"Calls to directory assistance now average approximately 49,000 per day," Brandes said, "and any increase in that volume will require the addition of expensive equipment in order to adequately handle these calls."

"We want to continue to improve service to our customers without adding to their costs. A reduction in calls to directory assistance for numbers readily available in the directory, would help significantly," he said.

"Of course, if the number requested is not listed in the directory, our operators will be happy to obtain it, provided it is a published number or is a new or changed listing," he continued.

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**ARTHRITIS**

"There are few treats when it comes to arthritis, but there are a lot of tricks peddled by quacks who are out to cash in on the pain and misery of this painful disease," warned Joan Rist, President of the Nevada Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation.

"Anyone who says there is a cure for arthritis is a quack," she stressed. And last year alone, these ruthless phonies robbed all-too-willing arthritis sufferers of an estimated \$485 million.


Arthritis is made-to-order for quackery. It is chronic, incurable and can mysteriously disappear. Faced with this discouraging outlook, patients often turn to questionable and even dangerous form of treatment.

Joan Rist warned that falling into the hands of a quack always harms the arthritis patient. Sometimes the product itself is dangerous, such as the potent steroid drugs offered in Mexican clinics.

Yet, even if the product or device causes no damage, the lack of proper medical treatment allows the disease to progress and possibly cause permanent disability.

All arthritis victims should get in touch with the Nevada Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation or their doctor before trying any advertised arthritis remedy or treatment. For tips on how to spot a quack, write to the Nevada Chapter at 5030 Paradise Road A-207 Las Vegas, Nevada 89119.

Join Ray Willis for a look at what minorities are doing in Southern Nevada. Along with special local and nationally known guests, he makes this an interesting and informative half-hour.




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