

*law and custom, but it was wounded in the heart.*” —David Hackett Fischer



Paul Sequiera

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

**The Coming of Age**, by Simone de Beauvoir, paperback, Warner Library, 1973.

This is a—if not *the*—basic text on aging. Dense reading, but solidly informative, it asks such questions as: when is a person old? can aging—biological and/or psychological—be postponed? can society be restructured to salvage the skills of the old for their own sake and to society's advantage? Conditions of the aged are examined in three kinds of society: “historical,” “present-day” and “socialist.” Although Beauvoir presents no easy solutions, she does note that “the class struggle governs the manner in which old age takes hold of a man,” and points a hopeful direction for the future.

**Why Survive?—Being Old in America**, by Robert Butler, MD, Haper & Row, 1975, now in paperback \$5.95.

A Pulitzer Prize winning overview of the problem by the doctor/psychiatrist who coined the term “agism.” It is interesting, persuasive and authoritative on most of the crucial issues: e.g. housing, medical problems and the cost of care, violence directed against the aged, political action by and for the aged, suggestions for psychological as well as physical self-help.

Those who want to take action will find a long provocative “Agenda for Action” covering everything from consciousness-raising to “resistance” and “surveillance activity,” followed by a discussion of 14 goals that Butler suggests be made part of a “national policy on aging.”

**You and Your Aging Parent, The Modern Family's Guide to Emotional, Physical, and Financial**

# You Your and Aging Parent

BARBARA SILVERSTONE &  
HELEN KANDEL HYMAN

**Problems**, by Barbara Silverstone and Helen Kandel Hyman, Pantheon, 1976, \$10.

A useful reference work for those who have and/or an aging parent. It deals with feelings on the part of both sides of the generation gap that are difficult to handle and therefore dangerous. It attempts to guide the reader to a realistic assessment of the loss of independence on the part of the aged and the solutions that are appropriate at different stages of the continuum. There is a good chapter on the emotional problems of death and grief. The unusual strength of the book lies in the amount of up-to-date, practical information it offers on such matters as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, available community and private services, how to go about helping or getting help for the old ones who can still “manage independently” and for those who no

longer can. The appendices include directories of services and an abbreviated but informative checklist of common diseases of the elderly and their symptoms.

**Growing Old in America**, by David Hackett Fischer, Oxford Univ. Press, N.Y., 1977, \$10.95. David H. Fischer is a professor at Brandeis University, which has an unusually strong department of gerontology, and his book makes a contribution to scholarship and theory on the subject that reflects that collective concern. He reviews the history of the position of societal attitudes toward the old from the colonial beginnings of the U.S. to the present. His conclusion is that we must find “a better system that offers more dignity and prosperity to the old without imposing an increasingly heavy and regressive burden on the young.”

**Old People/New Lives—Community Creation in a Retirement Residence**, by Jennie-Keith Ross, U. of Chicago Press, 1977, \$13.50. This grossly overpriced little book is one of those rare dissertations that attract and hold the non-academic reader despite the shackles of the form. Jennie-Keith Ross spent a year among a group of elderly French workers in a facility set up by their trade union (with a sprinkling of non-members from the village in which the residence is located).

She was interested in observing the formation of “community,” starting from scratch, and she chronicles the process not only in statistical, but in engrossingly personal terms. Her findings argue for the “peer group community” as against a place in the extended family, and comparisons with other peer communities of different class composition and in different countries reinforce this conclusion.

Interestingly, the community forms by dividing the group into two antagonistic camps, based upon political divisions that had reality in the pasts of these people, but only symbolic importance in the present. The few residents who fail to integrate into the community are those that fail to take sides.

**Call It Zest**, by Elizabeth Yates, Stephen Greene Press, Brattleboro, Vt., 1977, \$7.95.

The subjects of these interviews are men and women—all past 70—who are living rich, meaningful lives. They have much in common, perhaps the most important being middle-class backgrounds which have prepared them to pick or pick up careers that can't be terminated by mandatory retirement ukases. All are religious in

some way or another. All are financially fairly secure. And all are interested in food—which may bear out Adelle Davis' belief that participation and nutrition are the twin keys to vigor in old age.

Included are doctors (one of whom becomes a clown, entertaining sick children when he retires), writers, ministers, an orchardist, a painter, a banker, an engineer, a restaurant owner and cook and a former saleswoman. What they prove is that given advantages—including the best of educations—old people not only enjoy their “golden years,” but contribute to the commonweal.

**Too Old, Too Sick, Too Bad**, by Frank Moss and Val Halamandaris, Aspen Systems, Germantown, Md.

This book by a former U.S. Senator (who is the author of most of the nursing home legislation presently on the statute books) and the associate counsel of the Senate's Committee on Aging, is to be published later this summer. Highly recommended by Jack Anderson, it deals with conditions in nursing homes and abuses of the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

**Nursing Homes**, by Linda Horn and Elma Griesel, introduction by Maggie Kuhn, Beacon Press, 1977, paperback \$2.95 (Reviewed in *IN THESE TIMES*, Aug. 1.)

**Prime Time**

A bi-monthly periodical “by and for older women” which runs unusually interesting and thoughtful articles, letters and news of the anti-agism movement plus radical perspectives on feminism. Sub. \$7, single copies 75¢. 420 W. 46th St., New York, NY, 10036

*broad basis can a just and free society be built.*” —David Hackett Fischer

# IN THESE TIMES

Editorial

## The Panama Canal Treaty

In spite of the Carter administration's Wilsonian ballyhoo about the desirability of "open diplomacy," its negotiations with Panama, like those under Kissinger and those of Wilson at Versailles, have been shrouded in secrecy. A week after the Aug. 10th announcement on Panama, Carter's two ambassadors Sol Linowitz and Ellsworth Bunker still refused to divulge the treaty's terms in testimony before the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. Meanwhile, the White House has managed public information about everything from the general terms of the agreement to the "history" of the canal and the American role in Panama.

Enough is known about the historical record of American interest in Panama and about the likely terms of agreement to assess the administration's intent. But the debate that has already erupted in the U.S. makes it anything but clear that Congress will ratify the agreements, and the position socialists and the left in the U.S. ought to take remains problematic.

Although political-economic penetration and control, rather than outright annexation, has been characteristic of American imperialism since the late 1890s, annexation (of Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, the Virgin Islands, Guantanamo, and the Canal Zone) has played a key role in securing bases and waterways for American military muscle and commercial advantage.

The pending agreement with Panama is designed to preserve the substance of American imperial power while giving up the annexationist form. "Rape," as Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of State Elihu Root called the Panama grab, is to be expiated by seduction.

- The U.S. will keep control of the canal until the year 2000. In the meantime it will reconstitute the canal agency so that its board of directors will consist of five Americans and four Panamanians. The agency administrator will be an American with a Panamanian deputy until 1990; thereafter until the year 2000 a Panamanian will be the administrator with an American deputy.

- The U.S. will maintain its military force in Panama until 2000, but with a reduced number of bases, and with some installations operated jointly with the Panama national guard. The U.S. will also train Panamanian security forces.

- The U.S. retains its right indefinitely after 1999 to intervene militarily to preserve the "neutrality" and sustained operation of the canal.

- For the canal right of way, Panama will receive \$50-\$60 million a year instead of the approximately \$2 million it now receives, and instead of the \$1 billion down and \$300 million per year the Panama Government had been asking.

- The U.S. will arrange some \$300 million in loans and credits from the Export-Import Bank, the Agency for International Development, and other sources for general economic development, and will facilitate another \$1 billion in investments and loans to develop a major copper mining project.

- Within three years after treaty ratification, Panama will assume full formal sovereignty over what is now the Canal Zone, but Americans will be accorded U.S. legal rights in Panamanian courts and Americans sentenced to jail terms will serve them in the U.S. There will be no compensation to Panama for being deprived of the land, resources and tax revenue in the canal zone area for the past 75 years.

In sum, the U.S. gives up perpetual ownership of the canal, while retaining an effectively perpetual right to intervene militarily in Panama's internal affairs.



The agreement is designed to preserve American imperial power while giving up outright annexation. Rape is to be replaced by seduction.

More important to American imperial objectives, the agreement sustains refusal of the U.S. since the turn of the century to submit the canal to international regulation and control. The pending agreement prevents the canal from becoming a true international waterway. And the Carter administration has solid reason to expect that under the treaty terms the canal, though formally Panamanian after the year 2000, will remain in effect an American canal.

If the agreement is fully consummated Panama's economy will be more intricately integrated into the U.S. corporate system of investment and trade; its military and police will continue to be American-trained; its currently broader bourgeois ruling class will be less nationalistically inclined the more it shares in the largesse of multinational corporate enterprise; the canal will operate under American-trained personnel; the Panamanian government will be inclined to cooperate with American policy and will be more strongly positioned to do so as the self-declared champion of formal Panamanian sovereignty against Yankee imperialism.

### Right opposition.

The American political right is marshalling its forces against the agreement. Ex-

cept for its lunatic fringe, which still yearns for the return of "Anglo-Saxon" world supremacy, the right's objective is less the canal itself than using the issue to build its constituency for other purposes including an assault on detente and rapprochement with Cuba.

Ronald Reagan has given the right its rallying cry: "We bought it, we paid for it, we built it." Which is wrong on all counts.

First, "we" did not buy the canal; the U.S. Government bought Philippe Bunau-Varilla's bankrupt corporation's rights for \$40 million, \$6 million of which went to J.P. Morgan & Co. as the financial agent in the transaction. And in the bargain, the government "bought" the services of one of Morgan's corporate law firms, Sullivan & Cromwell, whose William Nelson Cromwell leagued along with Bunau-Varilla to put across the transaction. Sen. Hayakawa's brazen statement that "we stole it fair and square" is closer to the truth.

Second, "we" did not pay for it. The U.S. advanced \$387 million through government bond flotations. World commerce paid for it through toll payments, which have amounted to over \$600 million since 1914. If anyone else paid for it, it was Colombia in losing Panama (the U.S. in 1921 compensated Colombia \$25

million in exchange for oil rights granted to American corporations), along with the Panamanians who lost the use of 533 square miles of their territory.

Third, "we" did not build it. Black West Indian labor built the canal, at wages of 10¢ an hour. And most of the lives lost in building the canal were black.

Right-wingers are lionizing President Theodore Roosevelt, who had no use for their neanderthal "free market" ideology, and are invoking his honor against Panama's supposed iniquity in not acquiescing in the 1903 treaty. But in arguing the unilateral abrogation by the U.S. of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850 with Britain, which would have submitted the canal to international control, Roosevelt proclaimed, "I do not admit the 'deadhand' of the treaty-making power in the past." And he argued that a nation has the right in its national interests to abrogate treaties unilaterally.

These right-wingers are among those who defend U.S. violations of treaties with Native Americans and who cheer on Cuban emigres violating U.S. treaty obligations. They also want to keep the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force Southern (Hemisphere) Commands and the counter-revolutionary U.S. Army Jungle Warfare Training Center in Panama. All of these are in violation of the 1903 treaty, since they are not there to defend the canal.

### Canal Zone socialism.

Conservatives and right-wingers (and nostalgic liberals) are also exploiting the American pride in the engineering and medical triumph represented by the canal. They are less vocal in noting that the Canal represents everything they denounce as "socialism" and "welfare statism." The canal's construction was and remains the largest single public works ever undertaken by the American government. The canal company is a government company that runs as efficiently as General Motors, or more so. Private enterprise is prohibited from the Canal Zone; and the American residents benefit from subsidized housing, public transportation, publicly owned retail stores, and "socialized" medicine. Success and a high standard of living without the profit motive. No wonder the American canal zone residents don't want to come home to capitalist America. They're very happy with their "socialist" colony.

Many on the American left are supporting the Carter administration on the pending agreement, on grounds that it is necessary to block right-wing strength in foreign policy matters generally and that the agreement is a decent step in a direction away from blatant imperialism. This position has merit. But we favor something better than another "lesser evil."

We think American socialists should participate in the debates on the canal issue to educate the American public about the history of American imperialism, to convince Americans of the need to respect other people's right to self-determination, specifically Panama's right to assume full sovereignty over its own land, including control of the canal, just as Egypt assumed control of Suez.

Ideally, however, it would be best to place all international waterways such as the Panama Canal under genuine international control participated in by all nations and consistent with Panama's sovereignty—one that guarantees equal commercial access and that closes such waterways to military vessels. Such a dispensation is not to be expected soon.

The pending agreement will neither restore Panama's full sovereign rights, nor will it accomplish internationalization. It will most probably retard the achievement of both well into the next century. It ought to be renegotiated.