

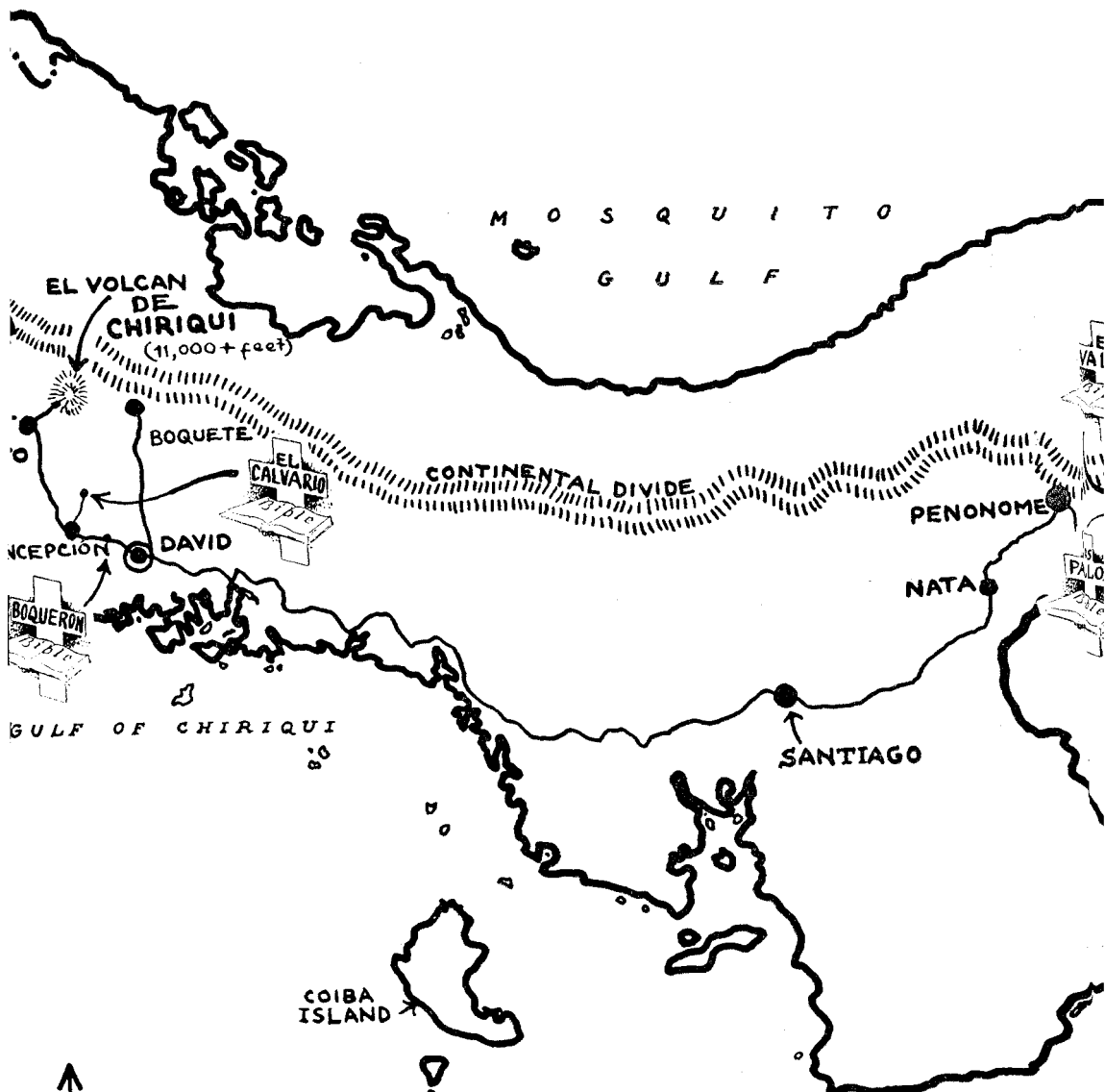
Christian Cooperation
at the
World's Crossroads



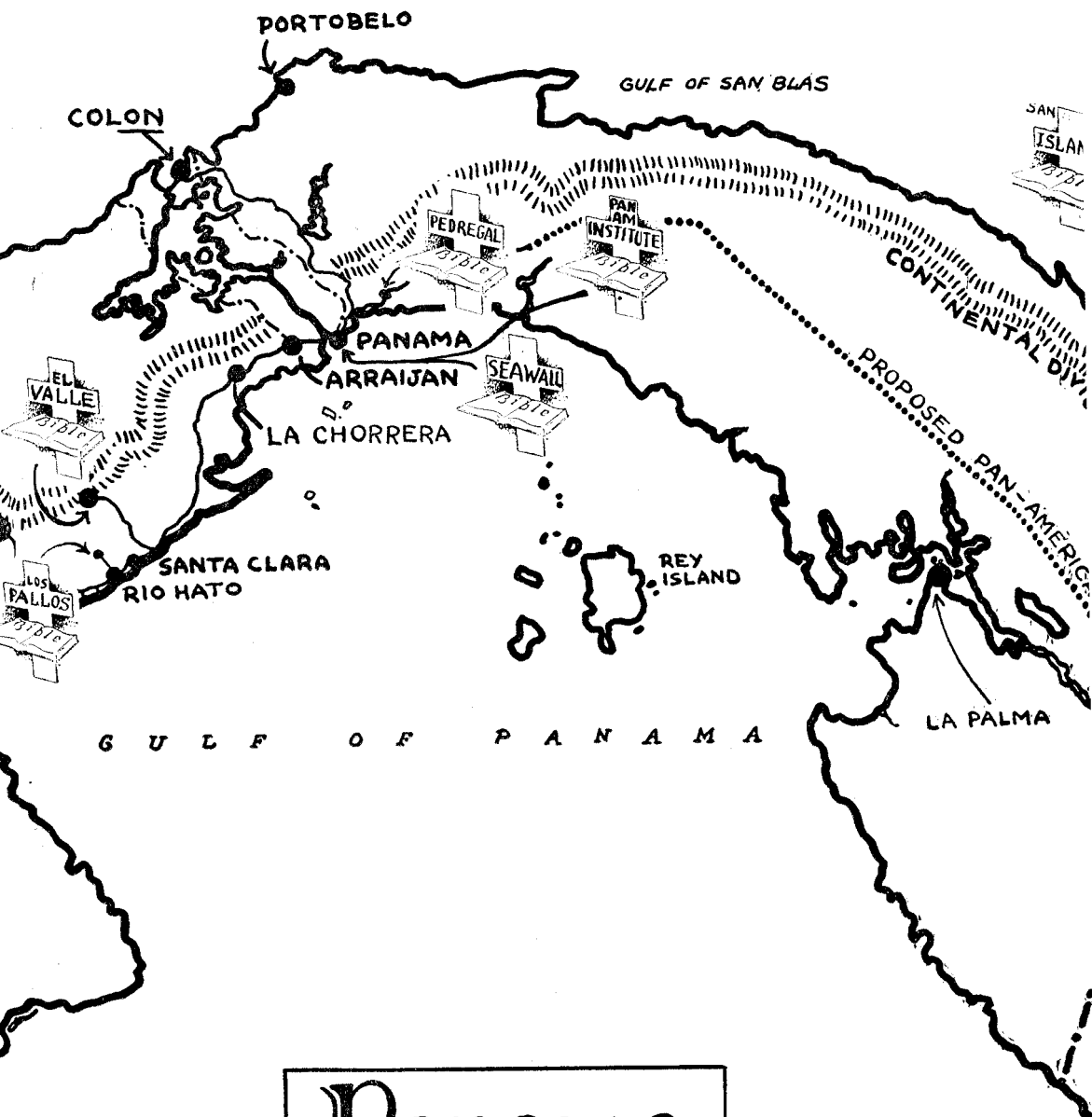
An Alternative to Sectarianism

Robert H. Collyer

C A R I B B E A N



P a c i f i c O c



Panama and canal zone

LEGEND ~

Missionary Work:
aided by the Union Church



THE DEDICATION

TO HIS AMBASSADORS

those far-visioned pioneers who advanced the high cause of the timeless Christ, by loving into existence these Union Churches, this volume is appropriately and affectionately dedicated.

LIKE HIS FIRST DISCIPLES—

they were laymen, consecrated and challenging and some were of rare mould. Pioneer souls, they were, blazing new trails in Faith. Matched were their dreams and their wisdom, their courage and their convictions. By their manner of life and deep devotion they proved that creeds may best be lived. Through the unique church they founded God has been made more real to passing throngs at the world's crossroads.



CHRISTIAN COOPERATION at the WORLD'S CROSSROADS

Depicting the amazing power of cooperative
Christianity as directed, since 1914, by

The General Council
and the
Seven Parish Units
of the
UNION CHURCH OF THE CANAL ZONE

Including
liberal dashes of local color
in both picture and text.

By
Robert H. Rolofson

With the story of the Panama Canal
briefed by
Albert V. McGeachy
editor "The Star and Herald"

**SO WE, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND
EVERYONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.—Romans 12:5**

April, 1950
Privately Printed
by
The Union Church of the Canal Zone

**WHERE ALL PROTESTANTS COOPERATE, WITH UNITY IN ESSENTIALS, LIBERTY
IN NON-ESSENTIALS AND CHARITY IN ALL THINGS.**



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THE PROLOGUE

I am the strangers' church, welcoming, through my seven parish units, the itinerant multitudes who find me at the world's crossroads upholding the excellencies of the world's life.

I am an inclusive church, blending into rugged spiritual energy the best of Protestantism. The alluring but elusive vision of Christian cooperation I make real. In the daily life of my parishes, without denominational discrimination, all Protestants work and worship in harmony. I welcome all and seek to serve all, knowing no division, be it of class, color, culture, race, or social frontier. I would so center life in Christ as to abolish sectarian trivialities and bring His clarifying order out of a confused ecclesiastical life.

I am a witnessing church, opening windows of spiritual wisdom to all who would be delivered from the bondage of believing only what their eyes see. My seven Church Schools aid hundreds in their quest for the truths, the insights, the glad and certain faith, and the Spirit of the Master Teacher. It is my high privilege daily to find promising youth at their crossroads, and to offer them guidance to the high road. To home-builders, struggling with the all-important business and the puzzling privilege of shaping the precious young lives God has entrusted to them, I give strong aid—and their own lives, I bless.

I am a ministering church, bringing cheer to the sick, comfort to the bereaved, and confidence to the disconsolate. I would lift the eyes of the provincial to the vast horizons of Christ's Kingdom. I would offer overcoming power to the weak and the tempted. I would lighten the burdens of the heavily laden, and dedicate to high ends the energies of the strong. My combined benevolences bring new hope to sufferers around the world, and spiritual enlightenment to many citizens of the foreign land that is my host. To the world's multitudes, who pass my doors, I would give firm assurance that, despite appearances, God is at work in His beautiful world, and that if His ways be neglected the abyss of ruin is certain.

I am a worshipping church, into whose sanctuaries souls retreat from life's sordidness, noise, passion and superficialities. Through me men seek to give habitation to the Most High and gain mastery over inner worlds. So I strive to stimulate their minds with Scriptural truths, interpreted in terms of the Spirit, and to challenge their lives by a thoughtful presentation of my Master's Gospel that the glorious enterprise of building a decent world may not falter.

I AM THE UNION CHURCH OF THE CANAL ZONE, symbolizing the genius and strength of my country, its non-divisive diversity, its democracy, its vigor, and its spiritual heritage. Amid the strange culture of this far-off land, I would be a monument to the inherent vitality of the Christian spirit, the deep devotion and prophetic wisdom of my founding fathers. I yearn increasingly to be an open channel for God's life-saving power. Healing sick souls, incarnating Christ's character, symbolizing the oneness of His purpose, and exemplifying His Way of life, I would herald to all Christendom, both by precept and unmatched example, the God-designed power of Christian cooperation.



INTRODUCTION

Harry Emerson Fosdick

This book tells the story of a most interesting and important adventure in the founding and operation of non-sectarian, inter-denominational community churches. When, in 1904, the United States Government took possession of the Canal Zone, the question arose as to how the United States citizens there and yet to come—there are 25,000 of them in the Zone now—were going to handle the expression of their Christian life and worship. Must the old patterns of sectarianism be represented in this new setting? Concentrated in a ten by fifty mile strip of land, at one of the main crossroads of the world, these Christians felt their unity more strongly than their diversity and the result makes an inspiring story.

Today there are seven Union Churches, located in the seven largest communities across the Canal Zone, and while, of course, there are other churches too, representing non-Protestants and a few non-cooperative sects within Protestantism, these Union Churches are the most powerful Christian influence in the Zone, vital in themselves and prophetic of the more united Christendom to which the future belongs.

Seen in wide perspective these Union Churches in the Canal Zone are part of one of the most important movements in Protestantism in recent years. After a long history of Protestant division, splitting sect from sect over issues that became ever more obviously anachronistic and trivial, the tide has turned. If Protestantism is to survive, if it is to confront effectively the towering enemies that endanger all Christian faith and life, it must turn from fission to cooperation, from partition to union. No foe of Protestantism but one of its most influential leaders has said that "Protestantism is the most divisive fact in American community life." The continuance of such a situation is intolerable, and alike in large overhead agencies of cooperation and in multiplying examples of union churches in the local field the strength of the new trend is evident.

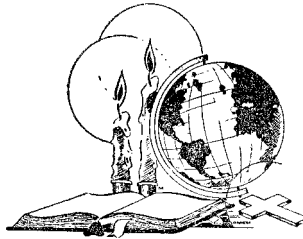
The World Council of Churches, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Foreign Missions Council and the Home Missions Council of North America, the International Council of Religious Education, Church World Service, and many similar organizations bear witness to the progress made toward unifying Protestant thought and work. Moreover, Councils of Churches have been established in nearly 700 cities and counties in the United States, as centers of united effort in handling local tasks, and there are more inclusive Councils in forty of the forty-eight states. Add to this some 3,000 interdenominational community churches in North America, together with fifty or more union churches of Protestant Americans overseas, and the growing strength of the movement in individual localities is evident.

The Union Churches in the Canal Zone, however, deserve attention and credit, not alone because they represent this trend in an especially interesting situation, but because they were among the early pioneers and trail-blazers. The Union Church movement was inaugurated in the Zone in 1914. That was only six years after the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America held its first meeting, and even before that far-seeing laymen and laywomen had been exploring the possibilities of side-tracking the development of sectarianism in the Zone, and of organizing Protestant worship and service on a united basis. These founding fathers were more than representatives of a movement; they were among its creators.

This volume seeks to record the problems, struggles and successes of this significant experiment at the world's crossroads. It offers evidence that God has blessed and prospered His united work there. Without fanfare, noise or flag waving, the church has given an effective spiritual ministry to the adherents of all Protestant communions. No institution in any Canal Zone community has higher standing than does the Union Church. From the outset its leaders have been among the Zone's strongest. Old timers say that they know of no instance of discord rooting in denominational differences. There is no wealth in the Zone. The members of these churches are plain people, living on government salaries. Yet, save for assistance in the erection of church buildings, the Union Church movement has been entirely self-

supporting, and this last year, having raised \$67,200 for operating expenses and having given \$7,457.00 for benevolence, they have an accumulated fund of \$44,750 for new buildings and other items in their developing program.

Most American churchmen know little or nothing about this Christian adventure of their fellow-countrymen in the Canal Zone. As one who has had the privilege of seeing it at first hand, I warmly commend this book to the attention of the Christian churches at home. The vision, devotion, venturesomeness and prophetic faith which have been exhibited in the Union Churches of the Zone are worth studying and emulating.



THE PREFACE

A true statesmanship determines the direction in which God is moving, then seeks to remove the obstacle in His path. During the opening decades of a promising new era in the world's life, the moving finger of God is unmistakably spelling out the word C-O-O-P-E-R-A-T-I-O-N. From world-encircling commercial enterprises and the solution of international problems to prophetic ecumenical emphases, the accent is definitely on the dwarfing of differences, the promotion of understanding, and the diminution of prerogatives, whether claimed by a Christian communion, an isolated group, or a major nation. By the above definition of statesmanship, tomorrow's multitudes will surely judge today's *Christian* statesmen. What, then, if Protestantism should miss the fact of cooperation?

The demented hermit who insisted that sunsets might be seen only from his hilltop was in the same bracket with that morass of introspective self-righteousness that lays exclusive claim to the possession of Christian Truth. A divided Christendom is at its stubborn worst in a local parish. Christian statesmen face no more baffling problem than to induce common folk in countless communities confidently to light the new fires of Christian cooperation on the old blackened hearths of denominational bigotries. Yet no design for Christian Unity will get off the drafting board until multitudes who love God and seek to live Christ's Way learn to walk in the green pastures of cooperation.

For nearly forty years the General Council of the Union Church of the Canal Zone has experimented in this grass roots area of Christendom's central problem. That experiment has grown to include seven parish units which serve every sizable community in the Canal Zone. Dr. Samuel McCrae Cavert, General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, rates this project as ". . . the most significant effort on the part of the Protestant Churches in providing the worship and service of the Christian Church on a united basis, . . . What has been achieved in the Canal Zone has an influence that reaches

far beyond its own area. It is a stimulus to the hope and faith of those in other parts of the nation who are sensitive to the spiritual weakness in a divided church, and who are devoted to a greater unity among all the people of Christ."

The publication of a summary of this localized venture has been motivated by a solemn compulsion to project it on a wider canvass that many might see—and be encouraged. If it serves as even a tiny finger pointing in the direction of Christian cooperation, the effort involved will have been compensated. The project is unique in that it is comprised of several parish units, whose effort, purposes and organization are unified under a General Council, and in that they minister to closely related communities of U. S. citizens, employed by their government but living in a foreign environment.

In portraying this landscape of an interesting yesterday, the virtue of readability has been coveted but not at the expense of documented accuracy. Indeed, no serious historian would choose to merit being classed as a good story teller in accordance with Mr. Irving Cobb's facetious definition—one who has a good memory but hopes that his readers have not. If a reader is disappointed in the absence of proper mention of certain persons or events which seem of importance, it is hoped that he will be aware that this primarily is not a volume of biographies. The whole of no story may be captured, nor is that as desirable as to epitomize the typical. Let him remember also the limitation of space in so small a volume, that this quite human view of Divine Grace lays no claim to infallibility, and that in some cases there has been difficulty in finding full and precise information. In *The Statesman's Creed*, Mr. Edward Young refers to "records that defy the tooth of time." Zonians, however, are familiar with no records that can defy the tooth of a tropical termite! Those gluttonous respecters-of-nothing are responsible for the total destruction of whole books of valuable data—pertinent especially to the Cristobal, Gatun and Pedro Miguel chapters.

The modus operandi employed by the General Council of the Union Church of the Canal Zone in preparing and publishing this volume was to assign the responsibility for the editorial and business policies to separate committees, with the author as chairman of both. The membership of the business committee included

the following General Council officers and local parish Council Chairmen:

Mr. A. R. Campbell, President	
Mr. Russell Klotz, Vice Chairman	
Mr. E. B. Webster, Treasurer	
Mr. Frank W. Hohmann, Chmn. Finance Com.	
Mr. J. Stuart McNair, Balboa	Mr. E. M. Kieswetter, Gamboa
Mr. I. F. Leslie, Cocoli	Mrs. Ruth Egolf, Gatun
Mr. Samuel L. Chollar, Cristo-	Mrs. Bruce Sanders, Jr., Margarita
bal	
Mr. D. R. McQuaig, Pedro Miguel	

Besides determining the overall content of the publication, it was the assignment of the Editorial Committee to seek nuggets of interest and pertinence in mouldy, monotonous, and sometimes illegible records. Each committee member was responsible for providing material concerning his or her own church. Naturally, the help of researchers, too numerous to mention here, was enlisted. The discoveries were relayed to the author, to be ground through his Remington an average of four times. In all the parish chapters, even his own, he was limited to what was thus submitted. Before "Finis" was written on any of the parish manuscripts, the data were carefully perused and criticized by the committeemen involved. The membership of this committee follows:

Messrs. A. R. Campbell and Russell L. Klotz, exofficio	
Mr. Harvey McConaughy, providing General Council information	
Mr. Howard Osborne, Balboa	Mrs. George Darnall, Gamboa
Mrs. Harry Davis, Cocoli	Mr. Arthur R. Lane, Gatun
Mr. I. W. Metzger, Cristobal	Mr. H. I. Tinnin, Margarita
Mrs. Daisy Fortner, Pedro Miguel	

In addition to the personnel of these two committees, there are individuals to whom the author is deeply indebted. Dr. J. Quinter Miller, Associate General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, gave much aid, including the providing of information and the making of certain contacts. It was the Rev. Raymond Gray to whom the author looked for criticisms of the manuscript from a literary viewpoint. The Rev. Philip Havener secured the photographs of, and the tabulated data concerning, the multitude of clergymen who have

served the seven parishes. The complexity and enormity of this task prompted the abandonment of an original ambition to procure and publish a biographical sketch of each. Since this could not be accomplished for the majority it was abandoned for all save those who currently serve. Certain of the material in Book I was collected by Miss Dorothy Knowles. The correlation of the tabulations in Book IV was engineered by Mrs. Rene Conlon. Mrs. Maxwell Smith labored at the puzzling task of securing parish pictures, and the finding of names for radically changed faces in the historic groups. A major portion of the final typing task was ably carried by Mrs. Lillian Farrell. Cooperative friends outside the Union Church family include photographers, credit lines for whose work are carried when known. There is also Mr. Albert V. McGeachy, whose fitness for the authoring of Book V is difficult to equal. As a mere lad he was employed by the Canal builders. Subsequently he was associated with Panama's oldest daily, *The Star and Herald*, and since 1919 has been its editor. The cover design and maps are a product of the artistic talents of Mr. Burt Paige.

The most difficult single problem in preparing these pages has been to find the appropriate time and seclusion. The latter has been sought in the guest rooms of the American Bible Society's spacious home in Cristobal; in the Panama Automobile Club's isolated mountain cabin, and in the beautiful Baldwin Lodge of the Boy Scouts' El Volcan Camp near the Costa Rican Border. Most of it, however, has been hammered out in the work shop of a busy church, on the anvil of expediency—between phone calls, sermon preparation, visits to the sick and other duties. For nearly two years the alleged day of rest each week, together with holidays and other slack moments, have been utilized, thus diminishing interference with parish programs.

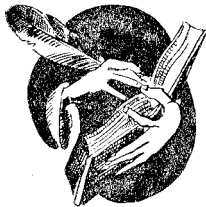
When the author accepted this assignment, initiated by the General Council, his lone regret was that long ago circumstances had prevented this coveted privilege from falling to certain capable laymen, prominent leaders whose years of devotion had earned them that opportunity. It has, however, been a most welcome vehicle for a modest crusade on behalf of a highly important cause. If, in the presentation of a notable ex-

periment in Christian cooperation, some tender denominational corns have been stepped on, let it be clear that no offense was intended.

In the first four Books all unquoted opinions are the author's. They are not necessarily shared by others.

Balboa, Canal Zone
November, 1950

Robert H. Palapsoy



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BOOK ONE

ZONELORE

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BOOK ONE

ZONELORE

Everything from an amusing yarn to a solitaire is influenced by its setting. This of course applies to the history of Cooperative Christianity at the world's crossroads. Before telling that story, therefore, it has seemed important to orient the uninitiated reader, and to renew the memories of the experienced, with a brief portrayal of certain interesting and unique aspects of life in the Canal Zone and its environs. Meanwhile, let two things be clear. This section of the volume, unlike its companions, depends largely upon casual observations for its data, while its style is informal. Second: The author desires it known that all viewpoints are his alone.

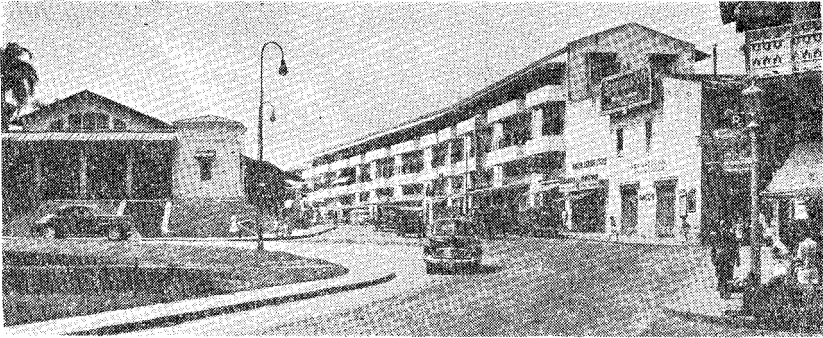
A Blending of Cultures

The most obvious local novelty is the Canal Zone itself, for surely there is no other ten-by-fifty mile strip of land carrying a world marine highway connecting two major oceans and completely bisecting one republic while controlled and operated by another! The landlady is one of the smallest of autonomous lands, her tenant one of the world's strongest. Inside the Zone the tenant has complete authority, outside it the landlady is sovereign—quite! By comparison she is physically inept, yet the pointing of her tiny finger to chapter and verse of the treaty-lease brings her giant tenant to instant compliance with the letter of the law—plus!

The traditions, the cultures, the customs, and the innate philosophies of these countries are widely separated. The landlady's household echoes ancient Spain, whereas her tenant is the most progressive exponent of the Western world. Yet, without warning or the slightest preparation, these widely variant ways of life were thrown into the most intimate daily relationships. On no border street is there even a designating chalk mark, much less a guard, to hinder or even observe the freest interchange. Moreover, thousands of the landlady's family are

employed by the tenant, working and often residing in proximity to latter's citizens. Both countries may rightly be proud of the basic harmony that prevails despite the adverse influence coming from imported radical labor agitators, unspanked juvenile intellectuals, and prejudice-dominated North Americans.

Whether language is to serve as a bridge or a barrier frequently determines success or failure in human relationships,



Official Panama Canal photograph
 Border street scene illustrating the absence of barrier or guard between the Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama. The sidewalk and buildings on the right are in Panama City. The pavement and all on the left, including the Ancon Post Office, are in the Canal Zone.

all the way from the mutual understanding of two individuals to international affairs. The landlady's life is, of necessity, bi-lingual. To Spanish she must add at least English, if her tenant contacts are to be efficient and if her tradesmen are to serve their cosmopolitan customers. Quite appropriately she insists that official communications with her government must be in the language of her people. The English dialogue of motion pictures, however, is briefed with synchronized Spanish titles, while most news reels have Spanish commentation. National pride is alleged to have given birth to an edict requiring that Panama's newspapers be published in both English and Spanish, and that when folded for delivery the Spanish section must be on the outside. When verandas are wet during the rainy season the protective inside folding inadvertently becomes a safety measure for English readers.

In both areas traffic signs are bi-lingual. Panama's enthusiasm for baseball—pronounced as "beisbol"—is approaching

North America's love for that sport. Between the two law enforcement systems there is also splendid accord. Automobiles and their drivers, licensed in either area, may readily gain a license in the other. In all local trade, the American dollar, the Panamanian balboa, and lesser currency are interchangeable at face value. The University of Panama, erected with some of the funds originally paid for the Canal rights, offers courses in many areas of interest to Zonians. Spanish, long taught in the Zone high schools, is now in the elementary schools as well. There is an interesting tendency on both sides to appropriate words and phrases from the other. For example, one hears Panamanians, in Panama, order a "sandwich" instead of their "emparodado."

Most of this blending of cultures is of unalloyed benefit. But in the area of mixed marriages, of which there are a great many, questions arise. Strangely enough, a high percentage of men entering mixed marriages come from the Southern states where the color line is most traditional. In addition to the hazards of variant traditions and cultural inheritance, there is the deep-seated color prejudice on the part of all too many North American families and friends. This reflects harshly on the children born of the mixed marriage. Not welcoming such difficulties as would come from adjustment to totally white communities, many American men find that failure to return to the native land is an expedient solution. In consequence, there are in the Zone a sizable number of such families. The success or failure of these conubial ventures, as with any other, lies chiefly in the behavior and character of the participants.

But the bi-cultural process is a large story within itself and may not be told here.

The West Indian: General Factotum

A large portion of the Zone's population is West Indian. He adds to its life plenty of exasperation, amusement, helpfulness and pathos, but never serious tragedy. He is "West Indian" in the sense that more than four centuries ago he was brought in cruel chains from his native Africa to the Greater Antilles. Subsequently he served equally cruel Spanish masters in the early colonies established in Panama. The last major importation, employed as Canal construction labor, came largely from Barbados

and Jamaica. A small minority are naturalized citizens of Panama. The remainder are still British subjects.

The West Indian retains much of the Cockney flavor in his speech, as might be illustrated by an oft-told tale. An exhausted foreman asked his Barbadian helper to heat his lunch. After an abnormally long absence the helper reappeared announcing that he was ready to resume his post-lunch duties. When asked why he had not complied with the foreman's request, he insisted that he *had* "heated" the foreman's lunch. "Well, then, please bring it to me," pleaded his hungry boss. "Bring hit! Hi've hal-ready heated hit!" insisted the puzzled Negro. This minor tragedy ended with the helper patiently instructing his chief that if in the future he wanted his lunch "hotted" to say so in understandable English, rather than to so generously "hin-vite" him to "heat it." The accent involved is popularly known as "Bajan" (Barbadian). To mimic strange accents and dialects is a universally popular source of amusement. Some Zonians have mastered "Bajan" to the point of proficiency. A kindred amusement is the exchange of endless glossaries of West Indian idioms. The West Indian, as well as the Zonian, enjoys this exchange. Here are some samples:

Collar	—"Neck fence"
Comb	—"Hair rake"
Corset	—"Waist leggin"
Head	—"Coco Bone"
Hospital	—"Rest house"
Glove	—"Hand shoe"
Maturity	—"Ripeness" (She don't ripe enough to be a good maid)
Meat Grinder	—"Beef mill"
Rain Coat	—"Tent"
Shoes	—"Ground mashers"
Tooth Brush	—"Mouth broom"
Umbrella	—"Shower Stick," "Keep-dry" or "House in hand"

Verbs develop fantastic twists in "Bajan," like "Hit fat you," "Hi build ho ha suit," "Don' vex for that," and "My mistress she don' so cranky this week." Small words like "next" find themselves in strange lingual usages. "The nex mango he don' there," "Duz you wan' a nex helping?" If the "button is squaling" it is the door bell ringing. A man badly injured is "mash up

good." If a lady has not yet come out, "She isolate herself until now." If a flower is in bloom, "Hit hyatch." One of the most popular and truthful excuses for wanting a vacation is the hardy perennial, "She makin' a baby."

The West Indian is long removed from an unenlightened environment, yet there lingers a confidence in unreasonable tradition. Moonlight, for example, can "tech one in the haid." If a cross be made over a wound and covered by the hand, the bleeding supposedly will stop, provided the proper words are mumbled. Evil spirits are said to be warded off by the possession of a small stone called, and often believed to be, a petrified toad's eye. Some say the same result may be accomplished by wearing a necklace of teeth which were once owned and operated by a snake or a monkey. The burning of chicken feathers is also declared to be effective. To a neutral bystander this seems probable, unless the evil spirit's olfactory equipment be defective. It should be made clear, however, that a parallel case exists among some North American Negroes and white folks, and that the more intelligent and better informed West Indians are beyond such beliefs.

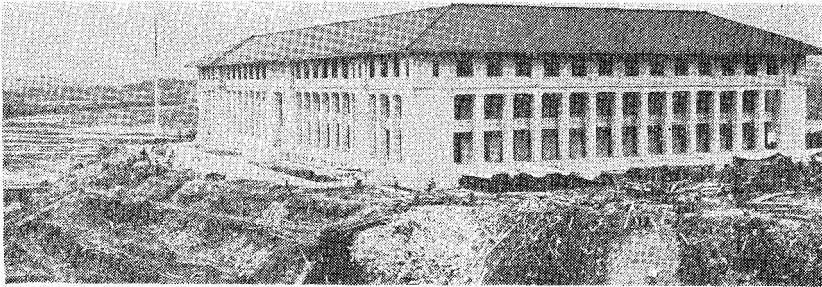
With the first slaves came voodooism, which for uncounted centuries had struck fear in the hearts of the Negroes' ancestors deep in the African forests. This crude cult, with all its murderous mystery, flowered in Panama's jungles until recent decades. According to an educated and trusted West Indian it lingers today in diluted form. He asserts that in the capital city alone there are twelve "meeting houses" for Voodoo fanciers, with a number of full-time missionary promoters. Of course, zombies are no longer created, nor are murders committed by the enemies of the doomed, but ghosts of such evil ones are said to walk in the eerie darkness of the hysteria-dominated meetings. There, bodily contortions, weird shoutings, the muffled beat of the tomtoms, and other hypnotic media are dominant. The old Medicine Man, with his uncanny skill at carving out the heart of a selected victim, is no longer present, but a modern likeness of him, fully equipped with luck charms, taboos, chicanery, herbs, and mystery-instilling chatter thrives on ignorance and age-old superstition.

The other side of the picture of local West Indian life is an

improvement over the condition of his neglected cousin in North America. Earnest, devoted and intelligent missionaries from the States and England are effectively lifting the level of his moral life and spiritual outreach. The Canal Zone Government provides for its colored employees and their families essentially the same services maintained for white employees—excellent schools, libraries, theaters, clubhouses, recreation facilities and commissaries.

Every community has its laboring class of people. In the Canal Zone the West Indian carries that role well. Save for the planning and the bossing, he does nearly everything. He is deck hand, grass cutter, and collector of garbage and laundry. He carpenters and drives trucks of all sorts. He cooks meals and serves them. He is janitor, painter, and an inevitable helper to every sort of artisan. As a policeman he is designated as a "patrolman." Among his own folk, he is often a teacher or a preacher, while his wife or daughter may be a dressmaker, a domestic servant, a laundress, a waitress or a clerk.

A top minority are mentally alert, courteous and efficient. Everyone, including the Canal executives, joins in the wish that a way might be found to give him a more commensurated stipend than is permitted by an inflexible wage scale, necessarily geared to the earnings of the majority. The line of a graph analysis of efficiency would probably descend rapidly from the top few, through a thin layer of the average, to a bottom layer. The economic wisdom of employing the latter is doubtful, if interest in the job, dependability, alertness and courtesy are determining factors. Many of the mature women are domestic servants with a rare "plus" in dependability, honesty, industry and genuinely motherly interest in the welfare of the entire household. Such qualities, for example, characterize the faithful servant inherited by the current occupants of the Balboa parsonage. Other homes are staffed with maids whose grandmothers allegedly are capable of averaging a funeral every fortnight! Rare ingenuity is exercised in concocting alibis. It is said to be bad luck to put one's hand into water on the same day that one irons. Need the point be explained? Again, since the skilled operator of a machine deserves more pay than a common laborer with a simple shovel, it is convenient to conclude that she who

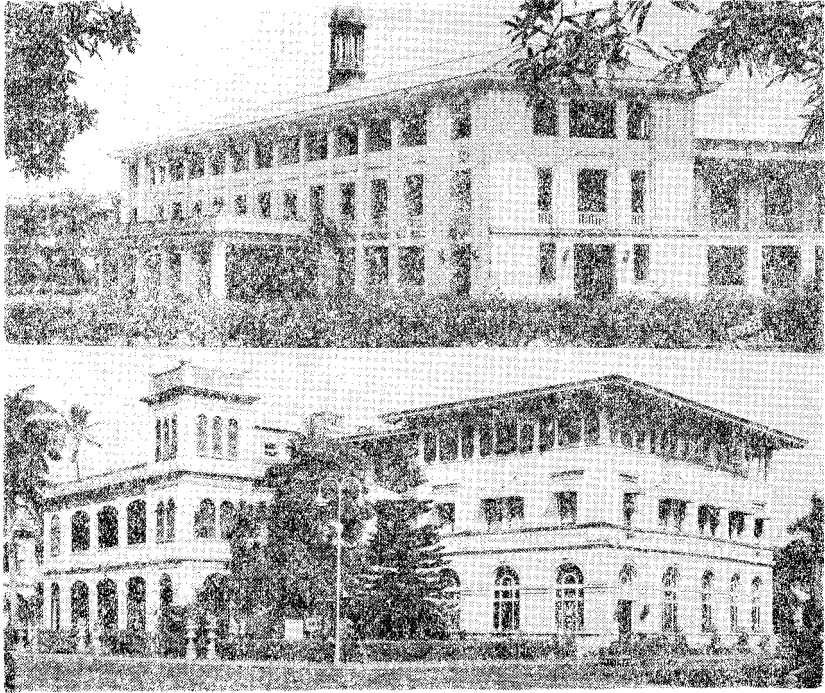


Official Panama Canal photograph
The Canal Administration Building; Capitol of the Canal Zone. Landscaping in progress
 —1914. Observe high-tide waters covering what now is Albright Air Force Base.

knows how to operate a complicated electric washing machine should receive more than she who uses only a washboard. Well? ?

If the Canal Zone West Indian worries, it is not about the sources of his income. To him there *is* a Santa Claus. His name is "Uncle Sam." The sources for filling Uncle Sam's money bags are thought to be as inexhaustible as are the sources for filling the gift pack of that other Santa Claus. So why bother about cause and effect, supply and demand, efficiency or economy? ? What matter is it whether the job be completed today, manana, or ever? When one job is finished, there will only be another. Why be worried? or anxious? Actually considering what he has observed among some of Uncle Sam-Santa Claus' own white sons over the past forty years, what other attitude might one expect?

We are told that it is as clerks in commissaries and club-houses that these folks most often irritate North Americans. "They know little, and many of them care less, about the purchasing habits of the public they are paid to serve" is a frequent commentary of the exasperated. Like every other colored person around the globe, they harbor an undercurrent of resentment at color lines. For centuries they have observed at close range the Latin gentry's allergy to menial labor, and many of them therefore feel that it is becoming to imitate that if one would aspire to enlarged opportunities. Inherent in these folk is a most annoying and unfortunate pride in downright stubbornness, a hair-trigger persecution complex, and a frustrating zombian tempo which nothing, save the approach of closing time, can quicken. When these characteristics are topped with



Official Panama Canal photograph
Public Buildings—Cristobal. Upper, Canal Zone police; Post Office, etc. Lower, one of several spacious Steamship office buildings.

an obvious conviction that the customer is always wrong, plus the hope that he won't buy anything anyhow, (especially if it needs wrapping) there remains no doubt in the customer's mind that he is over the proverbial barrel.

Nevertheless, a sneaking doubt lodges itself in the thoughtful Zonian's mind. What if, too long, the North American buying public has fattened its world-famous boorishness and allowed its huge ego to become overstuffed with the retailer's dubious slogan, "The customer is always right"? The world did not "go to the dogs" during the long centuries prior to United States' super-speed and expeditious efficiency. Moreover, as a matter of fact, canal employees are the fortunate beneficiaries of economics inhering in the Canal Zone sales channels. Perhaps one's patience benefits by the enforced exercise it gets in clubhouses and commissaries.

Response to Autocracy

The Canal Zone is to the Federal Government as a colony or ward. The budget, domestic control, and over-all policies concerning every phase of its life come from Washington through established channels. At the top is the Canal Zone Governor, invariably an Army officer. In relation to the governed he is a dictator. In fairness to those who have held this position it must be said that they have sought to be open-minded. In a difficult position they have served well both the interests of the people and the government. There has not been the slightest hint of dishonest conniving to mar the splendid record of honesty on the part of a succession of Governors and their associates extending over a period of 35 years. The grist of office holders ground out by a multiplicity of political machines in North America is frequently of a quite inferior grade. But having been chosen by "the voice of the people" such politicians and their policies are customarily accepted, or at least silently endured. In the Canal Zone, however, no one has a vote on anything, not even a school board. There is, in fact, no school board. Instead there is a division of Schools, responsible, like all other Divisions, directly to the Governor's office. Contingent on such an arrangement, so entirely foreign to North American tradition, are two obvious responses. First, a blind compensation is sought by passing on to one's inferior in occupational rank the spirit of autocratic authority. Second, there grows out of this autocracy, in exaggerated form, the prerogative of "griping." For similar reason this practice has been developed into an art among service personnel who from their youth have been steeped in the democratic way. Among certain Zonians "griping" reaches the plain and fancy stage. A minority who have not found perfection elsewhere, and are willing to settle for less in the Canal Zone, find their neighbor's habit of constant complaining no small annoyance. Yet, perhaps studied and systematic kicking has values. There is at least a precautionary value in giving one's instinct of pugnacity enough exercise to avoid its breaking its leash. The victims of this verbal vitrolization are virtually every phase of Canal Zone and Panamanian life. At the apex of popularity are the insane policies of occupational superiors and the stupidi-

ties of inferiors. A close competitor is the "debilitating tropical climate," and the "steaming disease-infested jungles." Meanwhile, the realistic probability is that if any spot in North America could boast a climate comparable in consistent pleasantness and freedom from earthquakes, floods, blizzards or cyclones, the altitude of real estate prices would exclude all but the Astors and the Gotrocks. Meanwhile, the local Chamber of Commerce would seriously sponsor an amendment to the Federal Constitution prohibiting negative criticism!

When the Panamanian, his country, customs, and multitude of faults come up for reprehension, the defense witnesses are amazingly scarce. The anvil chorus crescendoes into a climax of lamentation when the serious saviors of "what is left of the wreck" dip potent pens into corrective ink. Through news columns available for the purpose, profound conclusions are announced to the world in general, while ponderous anathemas are catapulted at clearly identifiable adversaries. Incidentally the concoctors of these verbal bombs usually seek security behind thick walls of anonymity. Some of the replies and counter replies involve philosophies that would prompt Socrates to double his dosage of hemlock. Others are literary gems sufficiently unique to give William Shakespeare the willies.

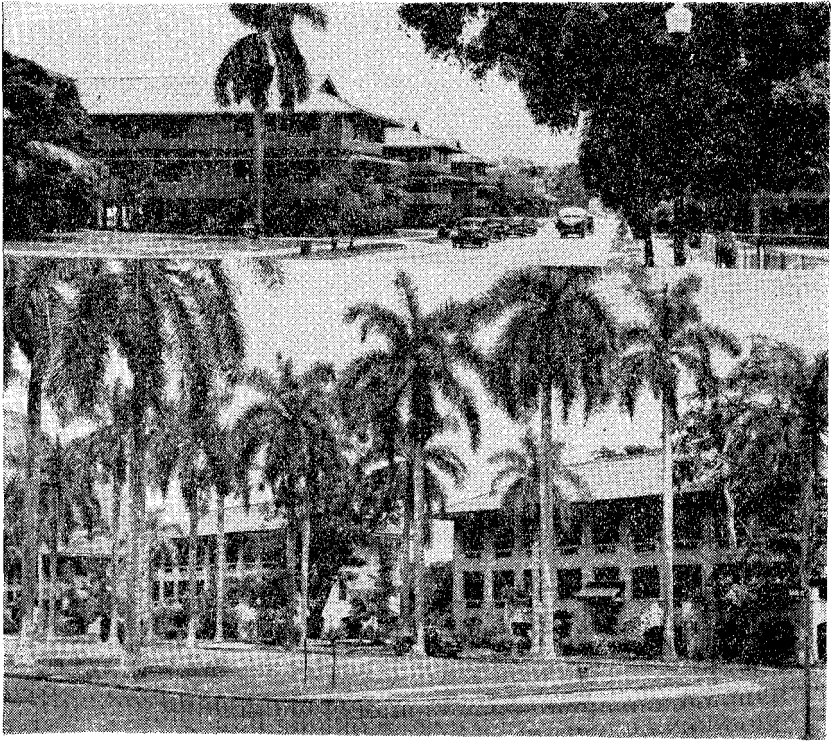
Housing

It is probable that more "deep-seated-let's-do-something-about-it" dissatisfaction accrues from inadequate housing than from any other single Canal Zone factor. Despite minimum rental rates, satisfactory incomes, and other assets of Zone life, families do return home rather than live out their days in houses which, with minor changes, perpetuate construction camp patterns.

Wood, the perfect termite diet, continues to be used instead of equally inexpensive concrete, to which most termites are allergic. The elevation of living quarters to second story altitude, by means of awkward stilts, seems to have been initiated by the French, who might easily have copied it from the tree-dwelling Indians of Darien. The arguments on behalf of the custom are denied by Panama City's most beautiful residential sections. With paper-thin walls, privacy in the universally ab-

horred twelve-family apartments is but wishful thinking. Their design offers little convenience and no beauty. There are, however, an increasing number of quite acceptable dwellings now being constructed. Those in charge declare that their hands are tied by Washington's reluctance to approve appreciable changes in the traditional housing patterns or to provide an adequate budget. The latter, most Zonians think, could be materially augmented if drastic changes were made in the enormous overhead charges of the Building Division.

Rather than to benefit by the experience in countless communities in adopting a system for numbering houses, the planning authorities preferred originality. Consequently Zonians point with meaningless pride to the unimpressive fact that no house number appears twice in the same community. For reasons



Better types of Canal housing. Upper, of wood—Ancon. Lower, of masonry—Balboa

difficult to justify, this plan seems to have been devised as an automatic record of the order in which houses were constructed. Whatever values (if any) originally inhered, are negated today by the resultant confusion. This is particularly true in areas where no allowance was made for the subsequent numbering of lots left vacant. When such lots were later occupied, confusing numbers had to be synthesized as, for example, 801, 801 X 801 X-A. Add to the numbering of streets that cavort into almost concentric circles, dwellings which for blocks on end look exactly alike, families which are perpetually on the move, and it adds up to sheer madness for him whose work requires the locating of specific home addresses.

On the seniority rating plan a quarter of a century of Canal service will entitle a family to a coveted cottage or a duplex with plenty of bedroom space for all the children who, by that time, are grown and gone! The base rental on a fairly adequate three bedroom apartment averages around \$40 to \$50 per month, including facilities.

Difficult for the stranger to conceive is the government's ownership of literally everything in the Canal Zone, including the 10,000 dwelling units and their furnishings. Exceptions include the properties of a few shipping and oil companies and religious organizations. These properties occupy government controlled land, the leases of which are revocable.

The silver lining on the housing cloud is a \$67,000,000 program being submitted to Washington for new and modernized dwellings.

Charged with the responsibility of assigning quarters, providing household equipment, and maintaining all sorts of services for house-holders is the Quartermaster. Needless to say, his job is an elongated headache. He is forever between—between the dictum of rules, wise or otherwise, and the demands, reasonable or unreasonable, of every family in the Canal Zone. Moreover, there are such things as budget limitations, the frailties of employed personnel, and delays which are quite unavoidable. Everything, from the destructive antics of a neighbor's pet monkey or his screaming parrot, termite destructiveness, roof repairs, uncut grass, new paint, broken chairs, the offensive odor of plant fertilizer, drunken truck drivers, fleas on the dog

next door, the love calls of a tom cat, unresponsive air pumps at the gas station and the need of a new electric range, to violent charges of discrimination in the assignment of quarters, pyramid into maddening exasperation for the Quartermaster.

The employee, however, insists that there is another angle which may be hinted at by the saga of "grandma's pulley." During the Stateside leave of grandma's son, a clothesline pulley broke. This she reported quite politely in writing. After several weeks of silence, there came a letter suggesting that she contact "Mr. I Pass Bucks." She did. That gentleman deeply regretted that mid-air pulley-supported clotheslines were officially frowned upon as being unsightly. He feared that the rather brittle rules could not therefore safely be stretched. A kindly neighbor, perhaps, not rule-bound, might be willing, etc., etc. At that point grandma, without batting a diplomatic eye, and with machine-gun rapidity, verbally tore yards of red tape into shreds. Spurning interruption, and with a strategy becoming a veteran street-corner orator, she then swung into a passionate affirmation of her unbounded faith in the Quartermaster's desire to care adequately for all housing problems. That educed an almost cordial response, immediately buttressed by designating Mr. Will Fix Pulley as the man whom grandma should contact. After all, he was assistant-to-somebody in charge of pulleys. How stupid not to have named him before! At latest account, however, trusting grandma has awaited action for nearly two years, with rapidly diminishing trust!

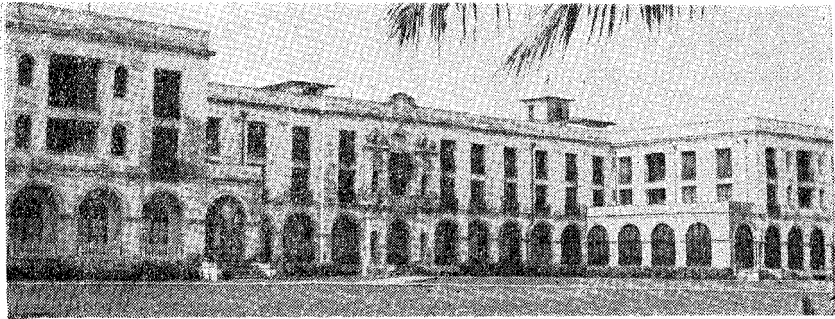
Uncle Sam as Salesman

Annually government commissaries retail \$33,000,000 worth of goods to Canal employees. Transiting ships pay \$20,000,000 in tolls and purchase another \$10,000,000 worth of supplies—food fuel and repairs. The government also owns, and operates between Colon and New York, three of the most modern and the most richly appointed passenger ships afloat. At either terminal of the Canal is a large hotel under excellent management.

With negligible exceptions all of the Zone residents are employed by the U. S. Government. The annual payroll is almost \$41,000,000. For the convenience of employees there are bowling alleys, swimming pools and playgrounds in advantageous



Official Panama Canal photograph



The Hotels Tivoli—Ancon and Washington—Colon whose rosters bear the names of Presidents, princes, stars, war lords, Christian ambassadors, authors, as well as of humble saints and sinners from literally everywhere.

locations. In each community there is also a Post Office, and a clubhouse with a restaurant, soda fountain, magazine rack, tobacco and candy counter and freshly baked goods. Commissaries that compare with medium sized department stores in the states provide life's essentials. The treaty with Panama forbids any private enterprise which would compete with native merchants or artisans. It limits the government to the selling of only basic necessities to its employees: its commissaries may not sell to persons other than those on the Canal's pay roll. To enforce this regulation, commissary coupon books, rather than money, are used for purchases. Only those with proper credentials may purchase the coupon books. Others may not legally even enter commissary buildings. It is alleged that Panamanians themselves are the most frequent violators of this provision designed to protect their own merchants.