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From the President

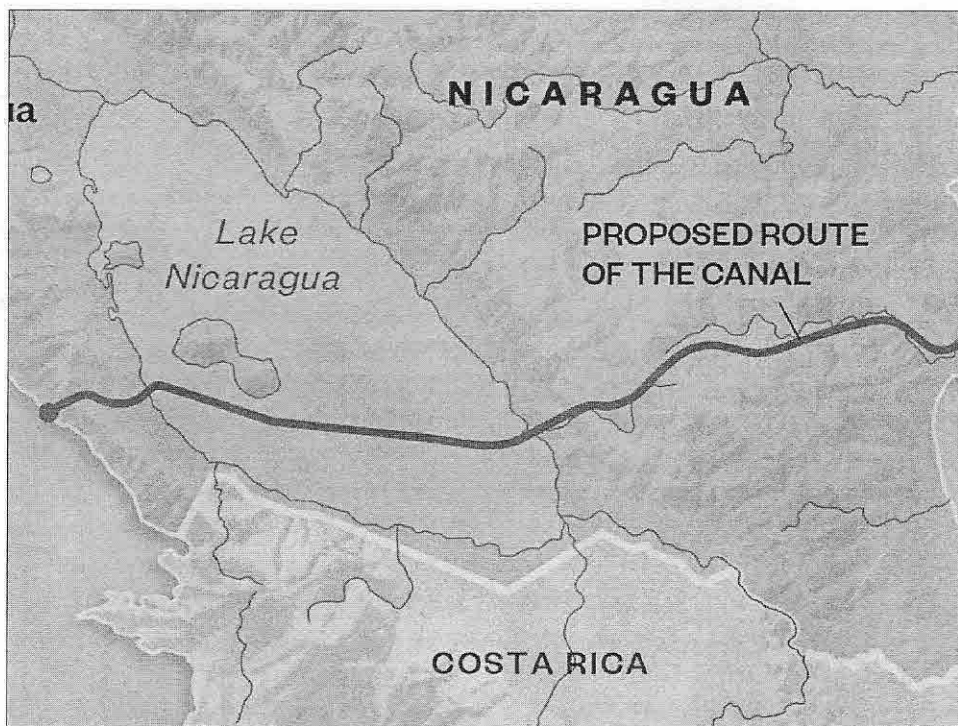
By David G. Barber

A matter of current discussion is the question of fees in the Chesapeake and Ohio National Historical Park. As you may be aware, the federal (and state) government has been cutting back support for parks for many years. But, usage has been increasing.

Currently, the C&O NHP charges for access to the Great Falls area where there is a huge parking lot and much demand. But, the remainder of the park and parking is free.

Recently, the park has proposed adding fees to park at Fletchers Cove and to walk in the park outside of Georgetown. In Georgetown, the towpath is part of the city pedestrian grid and enforcement would be impossible. For pedestrians, the fee is proposed at \$3 per week (increasing to \$7 per week in 2017) or \$30 per year. The C&O Canal Association is weighing in on this, and I wish them luck.

While I appreciate the need for added resources, I wonder about the practicality on a 184.5-mile towpath that is foot accessible at a great many points. How will the permits be sold? How enforced? The towpath is used for a few miles by the Appalachian Trail at Harpers Ferry and by the Tuscarora Trail at Hancock. Is someone who walked from Georgia or Maine going to have to pay a fee to walk these miles. What about the Capital Crescent Trail, which is immediately next to the towpath for many miles outside of DC. If you walk on one you pay, but the other is free? Doesn't this convert the limited staff to toll takers and enforcers? Or is most of the fee going to pay for new employees to do this? There are many who walk the towpath daily or use it to commute. Are you going to erect mobile toll traps



Will a new canal be built across Central America? See story on page 3.

to check everyone? Here in Massachusetts there is much said about the cost of the toll collectors on the Massachusetts Turnpike. The plan is to eliminate them.

When the park was first established, there was much concern about it restricting access to the Maryland shore of the Potomac River by fishermen. That issue was dealt with. But, fishing is a state issue. If you buy a Maryland fishing license, are you then going to have to pay to cross the park to get to the river? Or will fishermen be exempt, but not walkers? These are not easy issues. We will be awaiting further information.

On another, but related matter, I wish to report that in December, Congress enacted and the president approved legislation

to establish a National Park in the Blackstone Valley in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. What this will mean will be further defined in the next three years. But, the legislation includes by name, the Blackstone River and its tributaries and the Blackstone Canal.

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