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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

by CONGRESSWOMAN

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A whole new way of looking at the world has sharpened the sight of the American people since this time last year. It has produced a more realistic, more accurately self-critical appraisal of ourselves in relation to the rest of the world.

And it accounts for the fact that the House last week approved an appropriations bill for the Defense Department with hardly a murmur of protest even though it amounted to more than half the total Federal budget and was \$4 billion more than the same bill last year which caused an unforgettable uproar.

It is a rare thing in the history of nations for an entire people to wake up to reality, so to speak, overnight. It could only happen in an age of mass communications, perhaps, when such dramatic news as the launching of the Soviet "sputnik" could be flashed around the world almost simultaneously.

Facts to face

"Sputnik" alone cannot be credited with the new American self-awareness. But it shocked us to the point where we began to recognize other evidence, both before and after the event, as facts we must be prepared to face. The vast Soviet submarine fleet, the acknowledged Soviet lead in developing the "ultimate weapon," the Intercontinental Ballistics Missile, the impressive Russian educational achievements, and the great productive power of an economy already outproducing us in some critical fields-- these facts have sunk deeply into the American consciousness these past months.

The \$38 billion defense appropriation for the fiscal year beginning July 1-- which means expenditures of about \$41 billion-- is a major part of our response to the increased awareness of our danger. Those of us who participated in the floor debate were made graphically conscious of just how much of our people's money we were committing to defense. Committee charts, for instance, showed bundles of 1,000 \$1,000 bills. A theoretical stack of these big bills reaching 666 feet high, 111 feet taller than the Washington Monument, would total \$1 billion. A green forest of 41 towering stacks of \$1,000 bills is one thing the defense bill means.

So the fact that the bill was approved by a vote of 389 to 0 illustrates the seriousness with which the House views the situation.

This unanimity can best be appreciated in the context of last year's furious battle when a coalition led by the majority party here in the House succeeded in trimming a sizable \$2.6 billion from the President's request, including important cuts in allocations for research and development of new weapons.

The 12 months since ~~then~~, I believe, have justified the position some of us took against those cuts.

Lead from strength

Again in contrast to last year, there was a floor fight on only one amendment this year-- a relatively minor one holding the floor under the Regular Army at 900,000 rather than reducing it to 870,000, a difference of approximately one division.

I voted for the amendment because I thought that Army Secretary Brucker and General Taylor, Chief of Staff, made a strong case for meeting the Army's world-wide commitments. Psychologically, too, it seemed to me this was no time to weaken our military position-- what with so much uncertainty and so many shifting forces in the world today.

As the President has always insisted, we can be effective in this world only if we lead from strength, from a strength explicitly recognized and respected by friends and enemies alike.

This, of course, is why we willingly accept a defense budget that costs fully 10 percent of our gross national production and eats up just about half our total Federal budget. Polaris missiles, nuclear submarines, and supersonic bombers cost hundreds of times what their predecessor weapons once cost. But as the price of freedom and survival, they're very much worth the price.

Worth the price, I should add, with this qualification: that every last nickle's worth of value be wrung from every 5-cent piece we pay for defense.

Guarantee our investment

Which brings me straight to the point about the fight here this week over the Defense Reorganization Bill.

Passage of this tremendously important bill-- with the President's amendments accepted-- will do nothing less than make our huge investment in men, money, and weapons a sound investment.

Ever since World War II, individual Congressmen, Committees, outstanding laymen and military authorities, and committees of these eminent citizens have been looking at our defense establishment almost constantly. They have found waste, duplication, inefficiency, and a dangerously ineffective command organization.

But this year marks the first major effort, joined in by Congress and the Administration, to re-shape our armed forces in such a way that they can meet the demands of whatever kind of fighting we may have to do. Unless they are organized to accomplish this purpose, what excuse is there for the sacrifices Americans are making to support these forces?

It seems ironic, but in the bill the House must consider this week the Armed Services Committee has inserted a very few words in three key sections which threaten to ruin the purpose of the legislation. The President has used strong language and energetic determination in an all-out fight against these innocuous-looking provisions.

Convincing analysis

I intend to support him, because his analysis of the three offending provisions convinces me they would, in truth, pull the rug from beneath the whole reorganization effort.

The Committee, the President in effect says, has hedged and produced a "part-way" reorganization bill. As written, the bill would (1) force the Secretary of Defense to exercise his authority only through his subordinate Secretaries of the Army, Air Force and Navy; (2) permit any one of the three service chiefs of staff to block reorganization changes if he alone didn't like them; and (3) issue a bold invitation to any of the secretaries or chiefs of staff, who might feel offended, to come to Congress and publicly complain.

From his vast and detailed knowledge of military organization, the President has condemned these three proposals as "inviting insubordination," putting "a premium on intransigence," "repudiating combat flexibility," and legalizing "chaos," "friction," and "delay."

This is not the way to spend approximately \$40 billion a year, or to guarantee American survival in the nuclear age. So I shall support the President.