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October 23, 1974

Dear Walt:

Thank you most sincerely for your thorough letter of October 16.

I have read it with interest, and I want you to know that I very much appreciate having the benefit of your observations on several important issues facing our country during this difficult period. Your comments are always welcome, and I am most grateful for them. Valued friends such as you are important to me.

I can assure you, Walt, that I will keep your suggestions and thoughts in mind.

Thank you also for your prayers on behalf of Betty. She is truly a great gal and all the Fords are extremely proud of her. She is making an excellent recovery for which we are all thankful.

Thank you again for your letter. Hopefully I will have a chance to see you on October 29.

Warmest personal regards,

Mr. Walter J. Russell
Russell and Ward
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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502

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WILLIAM P. HODGKINS, JR.

October 16, 1974

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Attention: Mrs. Dorothy Downton
West Wing

Dear Mr. President:

Your speech of last evening was the best yet. It demonstrated the kind of leadership that those of us who know you have learned to expect. The tone was hard hitting and the syntax was down to earth. I am sure that everyone who heard you understood exactly what you wanted, what you expect, and what you expect of the Congress. I am sure that it will greatly aid in picking up campaign momentum and should go a long way to overcome voter apathy.

I have been filling in for Paul Goebel on several speaking occasions and I have had the feeling that the voters are looking for this kind of leadership from you. I am sure that if you continue to attack the problems in this tone we are going to move ahead with the programs you propose.

I also feel that your leaving the microphones open during your discussion with Senator Byrd about Governor Rockefeller's request to appear before the Senate Committee, whether planned or unplanned, an excellent move. It conveniently let the people in on your thinking and I am sure will prevent a great deal of speculation in the Press. It will serve to deflate those people who wanted to make political capital of the Goldberg book. Your openness and candor has always been one of your most effective weapons.

A handwritten signature in cursive, possibly reading "Thank", is written in the upper right quadrant of the page. The signature is enclosed in a simple, hand-drawn rectangular box.

RUSSELL AND WARD

The President
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Recently it came to my attention that the Department of Labor had been up to the Hill requesting some 50 to 60 million dollars for administration of the Employees Retirement Income Security Act for fiscal 1976. While I feel that this is a piece of excellent legislation and indicates a policy which I think is right, that is, to rely on the private sector of the economy to provide for retirement, I do think it points up one of the problems of holding down the budget. Each new piece of legislation, no matter how meritorious, becomes the occasion for an increase in government expenses. Might I suggest that consideration be given to adopting a firm rule in non-defense expenditures that whenever a federal department requests a new program that they first be required to eliminate other programs which will result in a budget savings at least equal to the cost of the new program. This will force the lower levels of government to consider the merits of each program in relationship to other existing programs. It may go a long way to eliminate programs which are no longer needed.

In my travels, I feel that it is important to report to you that there is a great deal of sentiment for reduction in military expenditures and particularly military expenditures involved in maintenance of forces in Western Europe. I am sure that this stems from a lack of conviction on the part of the people that it is necessary for us to maintain these troops. Unless the people become convinced, I am sure that these views will be much more strongly reflected in Congress in the next session. Therefore, I would urge that if you wish to maintain our present position in Europe that you personally communicate with the nation the reasons for keeping this force in being.

One other thought has occurred to me that I pass along. It may well have occurred to you and others in the administration previously. The Soviet Union has an exportable surplus of petroleum and it might well be that a favorable purchase of some petroleum vis-a-vis the sale of exportable grain could be made which might have the effect of somewhat easing pressures on petroleum prices.

RUSSELL AND WARD

The President
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I am sure you realize that all of our thoughts and prayers have been with you and Betty the past few weeks and both Mary Ann and I are pleased at her splendid recovery.

Our best wishes to both of you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RW' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

WJR:bh