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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dick Cheney

Warren Knowles
gave me this.

How about having
Don Rumsfeld also
respond.

April 1, 1976

Mr. R. F. Caswell
5232 Roberts Drive
Greendale, Wisconsin 53129

Dear Mr. Caswell:

I received your letter of March 31 with reference to President Ford's position concerning our defense policies. As a former Naval officer who served on the U.S.S. Nevada, I too desire to see that we maintain a strong military force and future defense and protection of our country. I am not aware of the facts recited in your letter concerning the proposed reduction of Naval strength but will see that it is called to President Ford's attention when he is here in Wisconsin this week. I am sure you are aware of the fact that President Ford served almost four years in World War II and participated in the 1st and 5th Carrier Operation aboard the U.S.S. Monterey. As a result I know that he is fully aware of the importance of our maintaining a strong Naval defense.

I am enclosing herewith a position paper which in general outlines President Ford's policies.

I hope that both you and your wife will join with me in supporting the President in his bid for reelection. I firmly believe he has done an outstanding job and has shown great courage with his many vetoes of legislation which adversely affects us as citizens, and that he will continue to do his best to deal with the multitude of problems which confront our nation in a courageous manner in spite of dealing with a free-spending, fiscally irresponsible democratic Congress.

With kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely,

Warren P. Knowles

WPK:br

Enclosure

5232 Roberts Drive
Greendale, Wisconsin 53129
31 March 1976

Governor Warren P. Knowles
Chairman, President Ford Committee
224 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Dear Governor Knowles:

In your recent letter, you correctly noted that my wife and I were undecided about who we should vote for in Wisconsin's primary election. Ordinarily, I would be very comfortable voting for President Ford, however, at a time when our nation is seemingly faced with an apparently aggressive Soviet Union that continues to modernize and strengthen her armed forces, I am worried and concerned that the Department of Defense and our President have requested a reduction of Naval Reserve strength from a 102,000 to 52,000 pay billets - a 49 percent reduction!

If anything, the energy shortage of approximately a year ago demonstrated to me that our nation is very dependent on receiving critical supplies through overseas lifelines that must be protected by our Navy. It was not an easy job during World War II to keep these lifelines open and I know that with the Soviet Navy as strong as it is, it may be an impossible task for our weaker Navy should war ever break out. That is why I find it so incredible that a program which I believe to be as cost effective as the Naval Reserve is scheduled for a 49% cut in strength. Rather than cutting this program, I think it should be strengthened.

In the past, the Navy had been criticized for not having established its firm mobilization requirements for reservists. This year however, I understand that the Chief of Naval Operations has done his homework and has put together strong justification supporting 102,000 Naval Reserve pay billets as his minimum mobilization requirements. Included in this figure I understand is specific support and requirements for 17 Reserve Seabee Battalions.

I think the Naval Reserve in general and the Seabee Reserve in particular are excellent bargains for America. While I am more familiar with the Seabee Reserve Program, I do know that under the direction of the Congress, the Readiness Commands are starting to shape up and considerable progress has been made in improving their mobilization readiness. The Seabee Reserve program on the other hand has been a well organized program for many years and should receive strong backing for the following reasons:

*A demonstrated mobilization requirement for 17 Reserve Seabee Battalions exist. As the active Seabee forces are cut back (the Administration is eliminating another active duty Seabee Battalion this year) this figure should increase -- certainly not decrease.

31 March 1976

*The battalions are mobilization ready as evidenced by the successful call up of RNMCB-12 and RNMCB-22 during the Vietnam Conflict. Both of these battalions served with distinction in Vietnam and are presently part of our reserve assets.

*The Seabee Reserves strongly support DOD and other governmental agencies with construction effort both during their drill weekends and during their annual two week training duty. The program provides excellent Seabee construction training and of course the only out of pocket government cost is for materials, a real bargain for the taxpayers.

*Seabee Reservists provide construction support to worthwhile non-profit-nonsectarian community organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other charitable organizations. Throughout the years, considerable community support and outstanding training has resulted from this program -- a benefit to both the civilian community and the Seabee Reserve.

*In addition to their wartime missions of construction and defensive operations, Seabee Reservists can be used in the event of natural disasters such as was done in the spring of 1974 after tornadoes struck Xenia, Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky.

In closing, I am amazed that the Administration would request a 49 percent reduction of Naval Reserve billets after both Congress and the Chief of Naval Operations have recently supported the present figure of 102,000. I find this action incongruent with the President's statements that he supports a strong national defense. I am personally interested in our national defense, concerned about future Soviet intentions and feel that before I could vote for the President, I would have to see specific action to support a Naval Reserve of at least 102,000 pay billets and to include a Seabee Reserve of 17 battalions. I think our country needs these programs as well as a strong regular Navy. From the way I read events in Washington, the Administration does not support this view and it bothers me greatly.

Sincerely,

R. F. Caswell

R. F. Caswell