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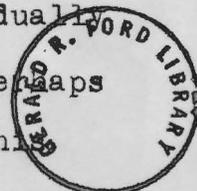
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Speech by Gerald R. Ford Jr - Republican Candidate for Congress
Monthly meeting of Grand Rapids Branch Reserve Officers Association - August 1948
RESERVE OFFICERS SPEECH

Fellow reserve officers: It was my original understanding that my opponent in the Republican Primary, the incumbent, Bartel J. Jonkman, was also to be a guest of the R.O.A. and was to appear on this platform with me so that you would have the opportunity of hearing first hand from those who seek to represent the 5th District in Washington. For one reason or another but obviously as the part of a plan to refrain from any public appearances before his constituents, Mr. Jonkman is not here. His reaction to your invitation was not entirely surprising to me. In the past several weeks your present representative in Congress, the man who is beholden to all of us for his position and who is legally and morally obliged to represent the voters of this district, refused four separate invitations from various civic groups.

To one, the Grand Rapids League of Women Voters, he replied for publication that he had "previous commitments" but the private reason for his refusal to participate in this non-partisan meeting, long a custom in political campaigns here, was that it would be a "spectacle." To others, one representing small businessmen in this district and another representing veterans, he curtly replied that he was "too busy." To an invitation by me to discuss the issues for the benefit of the voters of the 5th district Mr. Jonkman said, "there are no issues."

Mr. Jonkman's non-appearance before this group here tonight, the Reserve Officers Assn., is quite understandable. Many of you will recall that approximately one year ago he was your guest speaker. At that time he was to report to your members on National Defense and allied matters. I believe it was the concensus of those who heard ^{Mr.} Jonkman on that occasion that he knew little about the fundamental problems of our Armed Forces and had little or no knowledge about the problems you men individually or collectively had as a part of our national defense set-up. Perhaps his disappointing showing at your previous meeting accounts for his



failure to appear here tonight.

For your benefit let's look at the record. We can only judge a person's future action by his past record. I submit that Representative Jonkman is a product of, and a contributor to, the type of thinking that led him to vote against practically every measure which possibly could have bulwarked America's defenses before World War II. Both in Congress and in public appearances in 1940 and 1941 he showed his complete inability to perceive the dangers about us at that critical time. This lack of foresight, this blindness guided his thoughts at a time when our European friends and allies were over-run by the totalitarian nations and the catastrophe at Pearl Harbor was only a few months or even weeks away.

I can say to you who are in this audience, for all of us have had similar experiences during our various military careers, that we as citizens of this district can not again place our future and the welfare of the succeeding generations in the hands of a man who was partly to blame for an insufficient number of ships and planes during the early phases of the ^{last} war. We must have men in Washington with a civilian background who also know from first-hand knowledge that you can't build airplanes and train personnel overnight, that ships and their crews are not thrown together as fighting units in a fortnight, that tanks and those who man them are not equipped to face the enemy at the drop of a hat and that infantrymen are not trained to be ^{an} effective force by a 30 day drill period with wooden rifles. We have tolerated too long the presence of men in office ~~who are and~~ who were not cognizant of the fundamental problems facing us in building an adequate national defense.

This country is again in grave danger from totalitarian forces that seek to destroy democracy throughout the world. The threat to our national security and our way of life is as imminent today as it was in 1940 and 1941. This country can not afford again to be plagued with leadership that will lead us down the path of appeasement and retrenchment. Inasmuch as I strongly favor a foreign policy that is non-isolationist,



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I can not condone the activities of those who follow or who have followed the Munich philosophy "let's give in a little in hopes that they won't ask for more." You never stop a bully by retreating. Democracy's cause should be carried forward by those who have a deep conviction in the righteousness of our way of life. We must use superhuman efforts to sell democracy to the freedom loving nations throughout the world and at the same time we must be prepared and willing to defend our own interest in freedom by defending the right of others to decide between totalitarianism or democracy. We cannot convincingly carry the torch for freedom against the Russian bully unless we are adequately prepared from a military point of view.

I will briefly summarize our present military strength. On V.J. Day we had more than 10 million men and women in the Armed Forces. As of May 1948 the authorized strength of the Armed Forces was 1, 732,000 and on that date our actual strength was 85% of the authorized total or 1, 384,500

Since that date, after much invaluable time had been lost and after smoke screen after smoke screen had been laid to hide the dire need, Congress passed the peace time draft act in June 1948. I only hope that our position as a world power has not been prejudiced in these perilous times by delays resulting from a lack of courage on the part of certain legislators.

For a time at least the personnel problem of the Armed Forces has been met but Congress has the solemn obligation to re-examine the situation periodically to determine whether the present program achieves the maximum results both from the point of view of the Army, Navy and Air corps as well as from the point of view of the individuals who are called upon to serve their country. The present plan, hurriedly born in compromise in order to get something that would save face, unquestionably will have defects. If nominated and elected I promise to work for a program that will insure to those who serve an education or trade that will be valuable to them upon their re-entry into civilian life. I also



sincerely believe that a career in the Armed Forces can be made appealing to many of our young men. We who have served in the various branches of the military know what must be done along those lines. I, as your representative, will do my utmost to achieve this objective.

In April 1948, a 70 group air force was authorized by Congress. In light of the present foreign situation the upward revision from a 55 group air force to a 70 group air force was proper for we should do everything possible to guarantee the superiority of our air power in this air age. But the mere building of more planes does not answer the question. We must train new personnel and we must also keep trained those men who were trained during the last war.. This means proper attention to our Air corps reserves. They must have equipment, they must have a program that is integrated with the over-all scheme and they must have funds with which to operate. To-date money has been coming ^{to these groups} ~~in~~ slowly. There must be no more delay.

All of these points I urge for a twofold purpose. First, I think these actions are necessary to prepare us for ~~the~~ the eventuality of another war; second, I am sure that military strength in the United States is one of the few effective methods of convincing Russia--or any other nation--that tampering with our security is risking ~~the~~ destruction and sudden death.

If we convince the Russians of this, and if we continue to bulwark freedom-loving nations in Europe with dollars-and-cents aid in their struggle to remain free, then we may be assured that the already-cracking Communist bloc will not destroy peace in the world.

It has been encouraging in recent weeks to see the new ~~leadership~~ cooperation between the Army, Navy and Air Corp under the leadership of Secretary of Defense Forrestal. In the spring at the time of the celebrated Key West conference where Mr. Forrestal did his best to coordinate and integrate the efforts of the various branches of the service, it was evident that there was little real unity in thought or in action

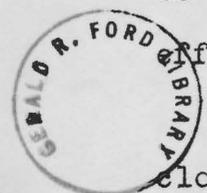


among our Admirals and Generals. This friction, this inability to arrive at a satisfactory solution, was discouraging to everyone who believed that true unification of the armed forces had become a reality as the result of the re-organization of the military departments by Congress. It appears however that the gravity of the foreign situation, the explosive character of the United States--Russian relations has brought new unity and accord. In brief the results can be summarized by stating that the Air Force gets the "exclusive role ~~of bombing enemy cities and enemy industry overseas~~ in the field of strategic air warfare." This is the job of bombing enemy cities and enemy industry overseas. The Navy will have exclusive control over anti-submarine warfare.

The still unsettled question is, Should the Navy have any 65,000 ton supercarriers for use on long range bombing missions? The Navy contends that these supercarriers are the best weapon for striking back quickly in case of a future Pearl Harbor. The Admirals argue that with carrier-based bombers we could strike rapidly anywhere in Europe or Asia. The Air Force claims that supercarriers are too costly and too vulnerable. The flying Generals contend that it is uneconomical and shortsighted to build one supercarrier when you could, for the same price, build 300 B-29 bombers.

^{R.}
As a former Naval officer who served two years aboard a combat carrier in the Pacific theatre I am familiar with the advantages of carrier striking power but I am ^{also} cognizant and quite familiar with the possible vulnerability of ^{or} floating air bases. Prejudices for or against based on previous service with one branch of the service or another cannot and should not influence one's thinking when we have our nation's security at stake. I can assure you that it will be my aim in Congress to support a program based on making our striking forces the most effective in the world.

There is an additional subject that should be mentioned before closing. Within the last several months you have heard of the move to



virtually do away with the National Guard. The plan is to make the National Guard a part of the regular army, stripping the various states of any control and substituting in its place a state militia. I am opposed to such a program.

The argument put forth for such a drastic change is that the National Guard is not up to regular army standards and that in the next war there will be no time to betrain and recondition the numerous units of the guard. Such an argument does not hold true for we all are familiar with the excellent and heroic records of our Michigan units when they were called up early ~~1st~~ ~~year~~ in the last war. If in some instances the National Guard has not been up to standard such a condition is the fault of the Army itself and is not a condition impossible to remedy providing there is proper supervision and direction.

I would also oppose the transfer of the National Guard away from state jurisdiction because it would give support to the growing belief that we in our own homes localities were unable to handle our own problems, that the federal government in another instance is the only government unit, ^{able} to cope with new problems facing us today.

This is a dangerous type of thinking. It has grown up in this and other Congressional districts--and more particularly within the federal government itself--because many of our representatives in Congress are not performing the duties that were laid out for them when this government was organized.

Specifically, ^{such congressman} they are not representing the people. They are part of a mass that votes through mass pressure directed against them on a national scale, rather than voting according to the beliefs of the individuals' congressman's constituents, and for the best interests of these constituents.

But to get back to the National Guard--it performs valuable functions for the various states. During local emergencies the Guard stands ready to protect your interests and mine. We should not turn this organ-



ization over to the central government. We should insist that the National Guard retain its identity and integrity so that it can ~~fx~~ function for us locally in times of peace and fight for the nation as a whole in times of war.

Whether most of you know it or not, this chapter of the Reserve Officer Association deserves special commendation for leading the fight during the last year for the passage of the "Like-pay-for-Like-Service" Bill in Congress. Until this organization put its shoulder to the wheel under the leadership of several of your officers, this bill in Congress was doomed to failure. For many years the army reserves had been unfairly discriminated against in that they received pay only while on active duty whereas the Navy and the National Guard received remuneration for drill and other activities.

At this time I would like to compliment those of you who worked so diligently on behalf of this project. I might add that the condition had existed too long and it might have been remedied sooner if we had had a representative in Congress who was alert and who ~~some~~ had some first-hand knowledge of conditions in the Armed Forces.

In Conclusion let me say that when elected to Congress I will strive to make our Armed Forces more efficient by more completely unifying the activities of the various departments. There must be integration and the elimination of duplicate roles and missions. We must provide ample funds for scientific research so that this country has the most advanced and modern equipment in all fields. Lastly, but not least, we must make the most effective use of our manpower. Those who serve in the Army, Navy, and Air corps in time of peace and war must be educated and trained to be useful and productive citizens upon re-entry into civilian life.

