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*Speeches H. J. R.*

GERALD R. FORD, JR.

MR. CHAIRMAN -

The presentation of this legislation brings to light one of the "shabbiest" performances by the executive branch of the government in the history of this Nation. The President and his advisors, including the then Secretary of Defense, Mr. Johnson, cancelled the construction of the supercarrier in April, 1949. The blame rests solely on the doorsteps of the White House. Congress authorized the ship and appropriated the necessary funds.

Because of this grievous error the American taxpayers lost 20 million dollars in material and labor plus 45 million in cost differential between the original supercarrier and the one proposed in this bill. In addition Mr. Truman's concurrence in the cancellation of the supercarrier in 1949 has cost 2½ to 3 years in time.

With these facts unquestioned, can there be faith, past or present, in the preparedness decisions by the President? It is high time that the Congress cease being a rubber-stamp to the dictatorial demands of the President and his advisors. The 81st Congress made a horrible record simply because in most instances it bowed weakly to the requests of Mr. Truman. That Congress did not truly represent the people but rather submitted to the dictates of the executive branch of the government. One of the few courageous stands taken by the 81st Congress was the report of the House Committee on Armed Services condemning the action taken by Mr. Truman in cancelling the supercarrier and firing Admiral Denfeld.



Our citizens are not so naive that they will believe there is any difference between the original supercarrier and the one proposed by this bill. The public would admire our President and his own military advisors if an honest statement were made admitting that an error had been made in 1949. No, that procedure is not followed. Instead, there is an attempt to justify the new carrier on the basis that it is really a different ship. Such subterfuge is reprehensible and should be exposed. A careful analysis of the blueprints of the two ships by qualified engineers would reveal, I am sure, no material difference between them. This is no time for "face saving". The Administration would get public confidence by straightforward admissions of past errors.

The need of aircraft carriers is best evidenced by their use in the Korean War. Without carriers in that part of the world our land forces would be in even worse condition than we now find them.

In conclusion, I emphasize that this Congress must assert itself and not rubberstamp the demands of the President and his advisors. The people elected the 82nd Congress to participate jointly in military and foreign affairs decisions and the President for the benefit of our Nation had better cooperate or Congress will take over to better strengthen our Nation and restore the confidence of our people.

