

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JUL 22 1975

WXPost

Sen. Goldwater on the Defense Budget

Columnist Clayton Fritchey in the July 15 edition of The Washington Post describes the Pentagon as a "devouring monster" that is "literally eating America out of house and home." President Eisenhower's well known warning against the consuming power of the "military-industrial complex" is a prophecy come true, Mr. Fritchey says, because defense spending in peacetime today has risen above its peak in World War II. It has even risen above total government spending in those war years, he asserts. He expresses alarm at this "unprecedented situation" because "a great majority of Americans are against it, yet feel helpless to do anything about it." Why? Because President Ford, like all presidents since Eisenhower, "is still giving the Pentagon carte blanche to spend as it sees fit." Finally, Mr. Fritchey warns us that big spenders of the Pentagon have captured management of President Ford's election campaign.

Mr. Fritchey's argument is as phony as the statistics on which it is based. Of course, if we measure spending in current dollars, as Mr. Fritchey does, the present Defense budget looks bigger than the entire federal budget in the early 1940's. So does the HEW

budget, which exceeds the Defense budget by 14 per cent. But in neither case does the comparison mean anything because of inflation. The general price level has roughly tripled over the last three decades.

In constant dollars, the Defense budget not only is lower today than the peak year of World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War. It is also lower than any peacetime year since the Korean War.

As a fraction of national income, Defense spending has never reached its 1959 level in the years since then. Today the fraction—less than seven per cent—is lower than in any year since 1950. Meanwhile, domestic spending by government—federal, state, and local—has risen steadily from 21 per cent of national income to more than 32 per cent.

While Defense spending rises more slowly than national income, domestic spending rises faster. The "devouring monster" is government, and it is devouring defense as well as everything else.

Nothing is more dangerously false than to say that the Pentagon is "devouring" the federal budget. Americans should know that they are buying

too little national security while wasting more and more tax dollars on ineffective domestic programs. My colleagues in the Congress know where most of the tax dollars are going. If we want to trim federal spending, we must now take a hard look at domestic programs. The Defense budget, far from being out of Congress' control has been cut by more than a third in real terms since 1968. Our defense effort is steadily working while the Soviet effort steadily grows.

Finally, let me say that the former Defense officials now serving as part of President Ford's election campaign have all demonstrated unselfish, dedicated service to the nation. They also proved to be tough, fiscal-minded men in a time of transition from wartime to peacetime budgets. They were chosen to serve in capacities exerting civilian control over the military because of a dedication to the nation and to the military, a military which is part of our society, not apart from society. Their first allegiance is and has been to our great country, and it will continue to be in their future pursuits.

Barry Goldwater,
United States Senator (Ariz.).
Washington.