

'The Way It Is...'

From a statement by Sen. John O. Pastore (D-R.I.) during debate on the defense procurement bill Sept. 24.

We in Rhode Island who have had a 200-year tradition with naval facilities in our state took 50 per cent of the cuts that were inflicted all over the country. One can imagine the severe blow dealt to the economy of our state. We have not gotten over it yet. I do not know whether we will ever get over it.

The Senator talked about no warning being given. I had heard rumors, and I was faced by the workers of Quonset Point and Newport Naval Base in my state of Rhode Island in September of 1972.

I picked up the telephone and called Admiral Zumwalt. I said:

"Admiral, you have come to me a number of times and have asked me to support the security of this country. And I have always done so, sometimes subjecting myself to criticism on the part of the penny pinchers."

When I was talking to the admiral on the telephone, I said: "What will happen, admiral?"

The admiral said: "Well, there has been a study going on for two years. We have not made up our minds yet."

Mr. President, their minds were already made up.

I said: "What is the study about? What is going to happen to us?"

The admiral said: "Well, I can't tell you."

He was very candidly elusive, and I told him so at the time we had hearings before the distinguished Senator from Missouri (Mr. Symington).

The admiral said: "Of course, the decision will have to be made by the Secretary of Defense."

I then called up Mel Laird. I asked him about it.

He said: "John, I know that there is a report. It is not on my desk yet. However, I am not going to take the responsibility. I am going to wait for the next Secretary."

So, we wrote a letter to Mr. Richardson, who had been nominated by the President to be the Secretary of Defense. I sent him a letter and congratulated him.

He said: "When I am confirmed, I will talk to you."

We went to the Pentagon. The

governor came down and we went with him to the Pentagon. We talked to Mr. Richardson. He took out one of these pads and made copious notes. When he got through, I said: "What can I report to the state I represent? What can I tell the people? Are they going to be ordered closed or not?"

He could not tell me. So, we had a meeting with the Massachusetts delegation in Tip O'Neal's office. Mr. Richardson was there again. And he was again elusive.

I said: "Well, can we throw our hats in the air or begin to cry in our beer?"

He said, "Well, you will be hurt."

I said: "Where?"

He said: "I can't tell you."

The only solution we had was to write a letter to the President of the United States. We wrote the President of the United States asking for a meeting. We got a letter back from a man by the name Cook saying: "We will refer it to the scheduling office."

I knew that the President was busy with Watergate. So, I called up Henry Kissinger. And I said: "You are in the President's office every day. Can you find out for us and let us know?"

When we did not hear from him, I called General Haig. They said that Kissinger had left for Paris.

I said: "What is the answer?" We had to wait until he came back.

So, Henry Kissinger came back. And there was another Secretary of Defense, Jim Schlesinger.

When Henry Kissinger came back I called and said: "Henry, what is the answer?"

He said I should talk with Jim Schlesinger.

I said yes, "I know him well. He used to be chairman of the AEC." I am vice chairman, of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.

I did not get anywhere. I called up General Haig and I said: "You are the new staff aide to the President." That was after Ehrlichman had resigned. He said: "Well, I will let you know." So, I never heard from him either.

So finally I talked with Tom Korologos, he took it up with the President, and finally the President saw us. He gave us the ultimatum. He said: "Gentlemen, I am sorry, but this is the way it is."