

Box No. 2513
San Antonio, Texas
25 March, 1957

Mr. Robert K. Bell
First National Bank Bldg.
Huntsville, Alabama

Dear Mr. Bell:

Your task of organizing a defense for Colonel Nickerson is not only a most difficult one, but from my own experience there is a strong tendency for people to do nothing, and it is hard to produce the evidence at the right time.

While in Detroit last week, the position of Mr. K. T. Keller became known to me. It appears that the cost of developing and carrying on the present missile program by the present suppliers of the Army is only a fraction of the cost if that program were shifted to the Air Force suppliers. Testimony from such a responsible source might be useful.

Of course I would not infer in any manner whatsoever that the "narrow base" procurement policy, instituted rather suddenly some years ago, had any relationship to the shifting of the tank program from Chrysler to GM. But in talking with Royal Little on 12 March, he mentioned that he had bought RYAN Industries with that policy in mind, only to find that the "narrow base" policy was again changed, and so he had to close down Ryan at Detroit.

The public is not fully aware of the extent to which missiles will replace military aircraft. Of course I would again not infer in any manner whatsoever that the huge potential of missile development, now partly in the hands of Army suppliers, such as Chrysler, had anything to do with the thinking of an individual who spent his business life with GM. Likewise, subordinates would not even consider writing policy, or specifications, to suit the Boss. However, it is possible that the record might show that the family of the Secretary of Defense is still associated with General Motors, and that the sharp reduction in the 1957 sale of such cars as Chevrolet has caused the adoption of a crash program for new models at GM.

During my own years in the Army, I twice opposed the policy line of very highly placed officials--and on matters as important as the one now involved. I lost both times--although Time has shown my position to have been correct.

It is my firm belief that today policy directives may be so worded as not only to be impossible to execute and retain control of the unit--as any commanding officer knows, but in addition the policy may be so designed that such physiological stress will be created in the subordinate that their destruction is certain. General MacArthur's opinion on his policy directives is known, and the activity of the Burgess-MacLean axis seemed fantastic at that time.

With best wishes and good luck

Very truly yours

R. W. Satterthwaite

Richard W. Satterthwaite
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