I!S. to **the NEWS**

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PRICE'S LETTER TO CARTER

When Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd said recently that he wouldn't call up a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty because "it wouldn't be ratified in the present atmosphere," he accurately reflected the American people's loss of confidence in the defense policies of the Carter Administration.

It doesn't help SALT II ratification prospects for the Senate to know that it is negotiated by soft-liner Paul Warnke. However, the underlying reason for SALT's unpopularity is that Carter has lost his original image as a plain-speaking leader who, by supporting human rights under the Helsinki Agreement and proposing a genuine bilateral reduction in strategic arms, could beat the Soviets in the diplomatic game of one-upmanship.

According to Aviation Week & Space Technology, the hallmark of the Carter Administration has now become "vacillation and retreat." The respected technical journal blasted Carter's cancellation of the B-1 bomber without even asking for any reciprocal concessions from the Soviets as "the most naive gesture an American president has ever made."

Elimination of the B-1 has been a priority goal in every U.S.-U.S.S.R. weapons negotiation, but Carter blithely gave it to the Soviets for nothing. Aviation Week concluded that "that thoughtless gesture, more than any other single fact, convinced the Soviets that Carter's tough talk was a thin facade that would soon crumble before their bullying."

It did. Every set of concessions offered to the Soviets by the Carter negotiators was rudely rejected by the Russians. Caught between Soviet intransigence and arrogance, Carter seems helpless to do anything but offer more and more concessions.

While retreating in his Soviet negotiations, Carter is aggressive against Congress. He vetoed the nuclear aircraft carrier recently voted by the Congress, and issued a veto message that, according to Sen«tor John Stennis (D-Miss.), was riddled with

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factual mistakes.

Carter's message brought a strong rebuttal from the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Melvin Price {D-Ill.). All his life, Price has been a loyal supporter of Democratic Presidents. But Carter's veto message was too much. In courteous words that carried overtones of more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger, Congressman Price said, "Finally, Mr. President, I must express to you my deep concern about the picture we are presenting to the world of our willingnes_s to provide necessary leader ship. I am concerned about what appears to be a propensity to forego [our] military responsibilfties."

The Carter decisions that are a grave cause for concern, according to Price, are the cancellation of the 8-1 bomber, the cancellation of the SRAM short-range missile, the termination of Minuteman III missile production, the slowdown in the development of the MX mobile missile system, the cancellation of the neutron bomb, indecision on protecting land-based intercontinental missiles, and Carter's proposed withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea.

In his six-page letter hand delivered to the President, Price criticized the factual and fiscal errors in the President's veto message {which the Administration has been unable to substantiate or explain) and the White House "unwillingness to accept the Congressional role in the defense decision-making process."

Congressman Price's letter is ominously reminiscent of a strong warning issued by a former chairman of the same House Armed Services Committee, L. Mendel Rivers. On September 28, 1970, he charged that "we seem hell-bent on national suicide," and cited the 8-1 bomber as the prime case in point. "While we debate the question of maintaining our military capability," he said, "the Soviet Union quietly but openly forges ahead....If present trends continue, the United States will find itself clearly in second position wi.th the Soviet Union undisputably the greatest military power on earth."

What Chairman Rivers predicted eight years ago has now been substantially con firmed by Chairman Price.

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