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Florence P. Dwyer

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CONGRESSWOMAN DWYER'S

REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

OF THE UNION-ESSEX SUBURBS



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THE NEXT (AND LAST) EIGHT MONTHS

In the statement I issued announcing my intention not to seek reelection, I included this commitment:

"I intend to continue giving all my time to their service [my constituents in the 12th Congressional District] during the remaining eight months of this sixteenth and last year in Congress -- voting as independently as always, speaking out as candidly as ever, and pursuing those objectives I believe are in the public interest as vigorously as possible."

Now that I'm out of the hospital and back on the job, my arm all but fully healed, it may be useful to summarize some of the objectives which remain high on my personal priority list:

First -- and it's first in every sense of the word -- is an end to the war in Vietnam, or at least an end to U. S. military involvement there. Nothing that has happened in recent months has changed in the slightest my conviction that this war has been a fundamental mistake for the American people. Nothing we could possibly gain in Southeast Asia could be worth the cost in lives and money, disunity and destruction.

A SOLEMN PROMISE

If this sounds simplistic, I can assure you that years of thought, study and experience, painful weighing of impossible alternatives, and deep frustration with what seems to me to be 12 years of Government preoccupation with "face" or "image" at the expense of greater values, have been invested in reaching that conclusion. If we haven't achieved our legitimate objectives in this torn-apart corner of the world -- to whatever extent they may be considered legitimate -- after more years and more bombs and more destruction than we've ever put into any war anywhere, then those objectives are either unreachable or immoral or impossibly costly. To me, they're often all three!

Consequently, anything I can do in the next eight months to end this war, or shorten it, or speed U. S. withdrawal, or encourage negotiation or a ceasefire or any other step leading in the right direction, I shall do. Just as I have tried to do for the past eight years -- since, in fact the campaign of 1964.

This does not mean, I hasten to add, that I have lost hope in President Nixon's ability to conclude U. S. involvement. I remain convinced that he and his Administration want to leave Vietnam as quickly as we all do. And while I regret that Administration decisions have sometimes seemed to contradict their purposes, I remain hopeful that the President will find the way out this year. To the extent he does, he will have my support. If other options appear more fruitful, I shall back them.

GROWING DISILLUSION

Second, a workable system of disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures -- an objective which may seem redundant to those who recall that just last year Congress enacted, after much toil and trouble, a comprehensive and complex campaign finance reform law. Nevertheless, only months later and long before the first full election year has passed, there is growing disillusionment with this once proud product of reform. For several reasons: there are obvious loopholes in the law; already, numerous candidates and political committees have failed to register or report as required, whether through disdain or ignorance it's hard to say; other candidates and committees are confused and concerned at the excessive complexity of the requirements; and, so far, the enforcement efforts of the supervisory authorities have not been impressive.

Consider, as evidence of one prevailing attitude in Congress, this recent and revealing incident. Under the law, the Clerk of the House, the supervisory authority for House elections, must make financial reports available to the public within 48 hours of their receipt. A price of 10 cents a page was established for copies of such reports -- a figure some cynics suggested would return a handsome profit to the House. Now, however, the Committee on House Administration has decided to raise the price to \$1.00 a page, to discourage "the merely curious," they say.

A POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE

By the way, the Clerk expects to receive, this year, between 15 and 20 million pages of reports.

What this does to disclosure, the essence of the new law, hardly needs elaboration.

Bear in mind, please, that I'm probably prejudiced about this matter. I feel very strongly about abuses in the financing of political campaigns, and about the healthy "curiosity." Ultimately, freedom depends on this kind of inquisitiveness.

I'm biased, too, because I have my own disclosure plan, a plan most of my colleagues have heretofore tended to dismiss because it would be too effective, too foolproof, too informative. Briefly, as you may remember, it's based on Federally issued scrip which would replace money as the exclusive medium of exchange in elections. Available in the same denominations as money, and serially numbered so as to record on computers the contributors, the recipient candidates and committees, and the providers of goods and services who redeem it back into money, the scrip would permit day-by-day accounting of what's spent to win elections. And, of special importance, reports from candidates and committees would no longer be needed; disclosure would be automatic.

Interestingly -- and perhaps significantly -- the degree of active interest in my proposal has picked up appreciably since those most concerned have discovered how onerous and oppressive the new reporting requirements have become.

THE NEEDS OF OUR COUNTRY

Third, now that the Senate has begun to move on the Consumer Protection Act, which the House passed last year, the prospects for final enactment this year are good. As the original sponsor of this legislation, my next involvement will follow Senate action when House and Senate conferees will meet to resolve any differences between the two versions of the legislation.

Fourth, the Urban Mass Transportation program, another long-time effort of mine, may soon be expanded substantially. This year's Housing and Urban Development Act, shortly to be reported favorably by my Housing subcommittee, contains authority for operating subsidies for ailing rail and bus facilities. While my chief concern now is to assure that the added Federal funds will, in fact, produce improvements in commuter transportation, there is no doubt that survival of much existing service requires Federal assistance.

Fifth, Executive Branch reorganization, which many of you will recall has been a major item in my "More For Your Money Program," is also making progress. Just last week, I cast my vote to report favorably from a subcommittee of my Government Operations Committee the first of the President's four reorganization proposals, creation of a new Department of Community Development. We face a tough fight on the House floor but, if election-year politics don't intrude too severely, this constructive attempt to make Federal programs deliver on their promises should pass.

Sixth, another old-timer, revenue sharing, has suddenly come to life now that the Ways and Means Committee has approved a compromise bill. This bill, which will soon be considered by the full House, allocates a total of \$5.3 billion to State and local governments in 1972 and somewhat higher amounts in the four succeeding years up to a maximum of \$6.5 billion. The impact on revenue-hungry local governments will be considerable. Union County and its 21 municipalities, for example, will receive a total of \$10,694,017 the first year and Essex County the sum of \$18,787,045. In addition, \$44 million will go directly to the State.

This list by no means exhausts my interests. There will be many more decisions in the coming months to which I intend to contribute. But if we can restrain our political passions and place the needs of our country first, I shall consider the attainment of these objectives a fitting and satisfying culmination to 16 years as your Representative.