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### Report to the People Vol. 2 No. 6

Florence P. Dwyer

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# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

by CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER



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There's a great deal of difference, sometimes, in being for something publicly and doing anything about it privately.

It's a lesson one learns all too often here in Washington, and it's a lesson being taught today in two situations, in which many of you have shared with me a particularly strong interest.

One concerns the broad field of Federal-State relations and the general goal--apparently shared by almost everyone--of having State and local governments do those things they are best equipped to do and the Federal Government provide those services the States are not able to provide as well or as efficiently.

The second involves a well-known piece of legislation, H. R. 8002 by number, which was inspired by the Hoover Commission recommendation for simplifying and clarifying the budgetary process in such a way that appropriations voted by Congress can be better controlled on a year-by-year basis.

Both proposals have been hailed by most people on Capitol Hill and elsewhere as great contributions to economy and efficiency in government. All groups of the political spectrum have pledged allegiance to both proposals as great ideals.

Ideals, yes--but when the chips are down ideals seem, for some, a long way from actual practice.

For instance, look at the Federal-State relations situation. You will remember Abraham Lincoln's famous dictum: "The legitimate objective of Government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all or cannot do as well for themselves in their separate and individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, the Government ought not to interfere."

This classic statement has grown to have equal significance as a definition of roles between Federal and State governments as it has had for government and people in general. The President's Commission on Inter-governmental Relations during the first Eisenhower Administration approached its job from this general point of view, and its subsequent study developed in great detail the facts of Federal-State cooperation and conflict in the dozens of areas of mutual interest. The Commission's report, which was applauded as a model of practical wisdom, made this point: that

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the people would not permit important social and economic grant-in-aid programs to be turned back to the States until the States demonstrated a willingness to accept the responsibility for them and showed they had financial means to continue them.

A further step forward was taken last year when the President and the Conference of State Governors agreed to set up a Joint Federal-State Action Committee, composed of several Governors and Administration officials, which would recommend precise programs and concrete tax sources which could be returned to the States.

This Committee has now made its first preliminary report. It prefaced this report by stating clearly it was not recommending that worthwhile programs be reduced or eliminated; rather, it emphasized that the Committee's purpose was to identify some programs where local needs more effectively could be met by giving State and local governments full responsibility and by releasing certain tax sources as a way of financing them.

These preliminary recommendations were presented to the House Subcommittee on Inter-governmental Relations last week. As ranking minority member, I listened carefully to Governor Lane Dwinell of New Hampshire and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Anderson, co-chairmen of the Committee, as they spelled out recommendations, for example, to return older vocational education programs (vocational agriculture, home economics, trades and industry, and distributive occupations) to the States and to relinquish to the States part of the Federal tax on local telephone service.

The reaction -- which space doesn't permit to be described in detail -- was rough. No matter how sensible the recommendations were, they were obviously not popular. Witnesses Dwinell and Anderson were peppered with questions and protests, all designed to establish (a) that vocational education was too important to turn over to States alone; (b) that State legislatures couldn't be counted on to accept responsibility; and (c) that plans to turn over part of the telephone tax wouldn't work.

It's true that no less than four complicated and time-consuming steps would be required before Congress could give up and States accept responsibility for these particular vocational education programs. Congress would first have to repeal the basic Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 which makes Federal contributions mandatory. It would then have to amend the Federal tax laws to turn over a percentage of the local phone tax to the States. Each State legislature would have to follow up with legislation (a) to operate the vocational system without Federal help, and (b) to collect the phone tax.

Nevertheless, if there is sufficient merit to the idea that Federal and State governments should function each in its own field, these obstacles could be overcome.



Unfortunately, that isn't the whole story. Once the Federal Government becomes involved in a program, it's almost impossible to get them out. In the case at issue, the Federal Government contributes only 20 percent of the funds for these vocational education programs; they are not 50-50 matching grants as many other programs are. Yet, for people dependent on the Federal Government even to a small degree, the reluctance to give up that aid even where the States will fill in becomes overwhelming.

The moral is clear. People with a vested interest in the status quo are unwilling to take a chance with change, to risk a privileged position built on the old way of doing things.

Very much the same situation prevails with the Hoover Commission bill, H. R. 8002. Here, however, the bill has reached a crucial stage. Similar legislation has already passed the Senate. The bill was approved by my Government Operations Committee last year, and -- after much delay -- it was okayed by the Rules Committee and went to the floor of the House to be scheduled for debate and final action.

But here it's stuck. The Majority Leader, whose job it is to schedule it, won't move until he has more assurance that more Members really want the bill. He has reason to fear the opposition, since they include the chairman and ranking minority member of the powerful Appropriations Committee.

And so the situation stands -- until sufficient exertion (I won't say pressure) is produced to convince leaders the bill is really worth the effort. Here's the rub, however. The opposition, for some reason, finds it more palatable to consider appropriation bills the old way--even though greater efficiency and economy and considerably more public understanding of the Federal budget could be the result of H. R. 8002. By virtue of their powerful positions the opposition has attracted the quiet support of others in Congress, who will resist this legislation as long as they can do so privately.

The problem is to bring the bill up for consideration on the floor, where both supporters and opponents must take their positions publicly. This is important legislation, and it deserves to be debated on the floor in full public view regardless of the powerful interests opposed to it.

Private opposition has more than once melted under the glare of public light.

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LAST CALL FOR QUESTIONNAIRES -- I am happy to report that questionnaires are being returned at a good rate. I plan to have the results tabulated scientifically and to announce them publicly. To do this, I must set a closing date for receipt of questionnaires of March 29. If you haven't received one yet, write to me, and I'll get one to you right away. Thanks for your cooperation.