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Florence P. Dwyer

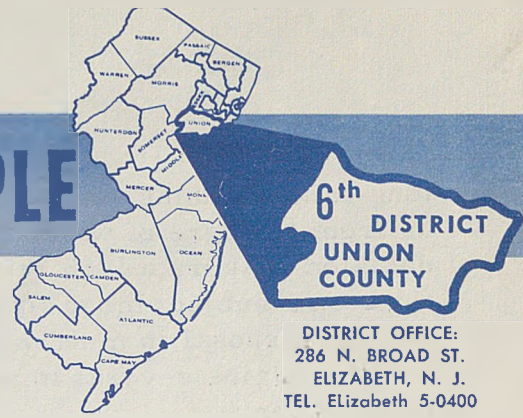
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CONGRESSWOMAN DWYER'S

REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

OF UNION COUNTY



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Thursday, July 22, 1965

ON WATER, DRUGS AND OTHER QUESTIONS

WATER -- ordinarily the most ignored and least attended to of our indispensable resources -- has become, for our part of the country, at least, the Nation's chief domestic crisis.

It has taken a full-fledged emergency, however, to bring home the fact that neither the States and local communities on the one hand or the Federal Government on the other nor both together have been able to assure our people and our industry an adequate supply of clean water. Our approach to the problem of water supply, sewerage disposal and pollution control has been, for the most part, piecemeal and uncoordinated. Now, after four years of steadily worsening drought have brought the entire Northeast to the edge of crisis, we have awakened to the fact that we can no longer take this most precious of our natural resources for granted.

Last week, the President directed the Secretary of the Interior to revive the Water Resources Council -- composed of officials from Federal agencies having responsibility in the field of water resources -- and report to him within a week on ways in which the Federal Government can help alleviate the drought.

A PROPOSAL

The next day, I wrote a long letter to the President welcoming his initiative as a useful first step but suggesting that the water emergency, in both its short- and long-range aspects, required more comprehensive and decisive action. Specifically, I proposed that he summon a Federal-State-Local conference to meet immediately after the Water Resources Council has reported. Such a conference, I indicated, should be composed of the officials directly responsible for acting in this crisis -- the Governors, Mayors, County officials and water experts from the drought area together with officials of the responsible Federal agencies and ranking members of the appropriate Congressional committees -- who, with personal knowledge of the needs and the available resources, could begin immediately to mobilize the information, funds and facilities necessary for an effective, well-coordinated assault against the drought.

In addition, I advanced 10 individual ideas which I believe this conference would find it profitable to explore. They include: the reallocation of funds under existing Federal sewerage disposal and pollution control programs to areas of greatest need; redirection of Federal research projects to those having the most immediate potential for useful results (waste water reclamation and reuse is an example); a survey of areas in and near the Northeast which have plentiful water supplies and a study of ways to transport the water to drought areas; construction of emergency pipelines, pumping stations and filtration plants to make maximum use of available water in the area; adoption of a broad program of water conservation techniques; and increased support for the water desalination program with the objective in mind of building plants for desalting water along the East Coast as soon as feasible.

AN OPPORTUNITY

As with all problems, our present water emergency can and, in the public interest, must be approached as an opportunity to go beyond the immediate danger and do the

--more--

long-range planning, organizing, coordinating and financing that will permanently rescue us from the ogre of water famine. Toward this end, I have been urging on some of our decision-makers a 1962 report of our Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations on a subject most simply described as, "Who should do what for water supply and sewage disposal in metropolitan areas?" I believe it's one of the best things we've done and it contains several important recommendations as well as much valuable background information.

DRUGS. -- Several weeks ago, I asked the question in this report, "What ever happened to the Drug Control bill?"

It's a pleasure, therefore, to tell you now that the bill has become law, and the Federal Government, through the Food and Drug Administration, now possesses an effective set of weapons in the war against the illicit peddling of dangerous drugs like "goof balls" and "pep pills" -- drugs which, when used without a doctor's guidance, can be as addictive as the hard narcotics and which have been a major cause of death, violence, delinquency, highway accidents and ruined lives.

Final passage of the bill came suddenly. As you may recall, the legislation had been pending before the House and Senate for several years. I first introduced the bill in 1962, in the 87th Congress. Last year, in the 88th Congress, the Senate passed it unanimously and early this year, after frequent appeals to the committee to hold hearings, the hearings were held and the House passed the bill overwhelmingly, one of the first major actions of the 89th Congress. This was in March, and four months of puzzling silence followed before the Senate once again acted and the bill was sent to the President.

THE TOOLS

Last week, the President signed the Drug Control Act into law, and I am happy to report that the President invited me to the White House to witness the signing and present me with one of the pens he used in making the bill a law. With the illegal traffic in dangerous drugs accounting for more than half the total production and netting in excess of \$1 billion annually -- much of it to the underworld -- the Administration will have its hands full bringing it under control. But we have finally provided the tools to do the job.

Since my last regular report, the House has passed two of this session's major bills -- the Housing bill and Voting Rights legislation. Although you've undoubtedly read a great deal about both bills, press reports tended to minimize a couple of points which I believe deserve more attention.

HOUSING. -- Passage of the Housing bill has been heralded as the President's closest and most important legislative victory this year. But was it? For the most part, the bill was a product of remarkable bi-partisan cooperation, and the controversy -- though it was heated -- was limited to the President's proposal to subsidize the rents of middle income families. As you may recall from previous of my reports, radio broadcasts, or news releases, I opposed this plan vigorously both in committee and on the House floor for two principal reasons: first, that it is unjust and inequitable to subsidize the rents of families with incomes substantially above the national average while millions of low-income families are without decent housing and, second, that for an "experimental" program, the 40-year, \$8 billion price tag was much too high.

Although we lost this fight, technically, by the hair-thin vote of 208 to 202, and the President was credited with a great victory, our defeat somehow looks a little brighter than the Administration's victory. For, prior to final passage, we forced proponents of the rent subsidy plan to reduce its cost by at least 25 percent and re-shape the program completely so that its benefits will go exclusively to the low-income families who need help most.

VOTING RIGHTS. -- Major attention was rightly given to the bill's provisions protecting Negroes' rights to register and vote, but the "clean elections" amendment, the only amendment to be adopted, is also highly significant. For the first time in Federal elections, it provides stiff penalties for falsifying voting or registration information or for buying votes -- protection of equal value in the rural South and the big-city North