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### Report to the People Vol. 11 No. 12

Florence P. Dwyer

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CONGRESSWOMAN DWYER'S

# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

## OF THE UNION-ESSEX SUBURBS



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Thursday, October 12, 1967

### ECONOMY: A WAY TO OBTAIN BETTER GOVERNMENT

The distinguished chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee -- the group whose great influence stems from its exclusive power to originate revenue (tax) legislation-- raised an immensely important issue late last week when he criticized his own Administration for "missing the point" about Congressional insistence on cutting Federal spending this year.

It's not simply that Congress believes it is urgent to reduce the budget in the face of an inflation-producing deficit which could reach \$30 billion -- welcome as such cuts would be, Chairman Mills pointed out -- but it's the more important objective of controlling and shaping the growth of the Federal government and the substance of Federal programs.

What we should be doing, he insisted, is looking beyond the next fiscal year or two and trying to make sure "that the kinds of things the Federal government does -- the nature of its claims on the economy (the Nation's productive capacity) -- conform with the Nation's changing preferences." Or, as he put it in the final sentence of his statement, "Let's start now on the big job of making sure our Government does what we want it to, the way we want it to, when we want it to, and as much as we want it to."

#### ...BY CHANGING THE SYSTEM

In other words, unless the system itself is changed -- unless Federal activities and programs are subjected to a systematic and rational process of review and evaluation on a continuing basis -- then the growth of Federal spending and Federal influence will become inevitable and unmanageable, contrary to all the canons of democratic theory. It's not a question of black-and-white or good versus evil. It's just that tax-financed programs, directed by officials who believe in those programs and supported by those who benefit from them, have a natural tendency to reproduce and multiply, and that the resulting structure of government -- massive, ponderous, impersonal and relatively unresponsive -- reduces the self-governing capacity of the people, the power of the people to decide their own future.

None of this is new, of course. But the significance of Chairman Mills' observations rests in the fact that he is one of the most respected and powerful leaders in Congress, a friend (though independent) of the Administration, a key figure in a critical position to influence crucial decisions. That a man of his stature should call attention so compellingly to facts which many would rather ignore, and at a time and place and under circumstances which cannot be avoided, provides hope that something may yet come of it.

There's been no shortage of solutions -- only a lack of will. And while the chairman seemed to direct his criticism chiefly at the Administration, he might well have spared a share for his colleagues on Capitol Hill. For it is here, stacked away gathering dust on committee shelves, that some of the most hopeful and constructive devices for improving governmental performance and strengthening the people's control over the Federal establishment can be found.

#### ...ADOPTING SPECIFIC REFORMS

As a sponsor of many such measures, I've had occasion to describe them in previous newsletters, so I'll only mention a few in passing. You'll remember, for example, such proposals as: (1) the mandatory, periodic review of Federal grant-in-aid programs so as to eliminate the outmoded and unnecessary, improve the useful, and revise others according to changing needs; (2) the establishment of a new Hoover Commission to conduct a comprehensive and independent study of the entire Federal structure and recommend ways of simplifying, coordinating and re-arranging in a more efficient way the functions and activities of the Executive Branch; (3) the creation of a similar commission to determine how the Federal

-- more --

Government can utilize modern systems analysis and advanced management techniques to resolve problems in such major areas as housing, pollution control, education, etc. more effectively; and (4) the insistence that up-to-date cost accounting systems be installed in all departments and agencies as an essential step in controlling costs and evaluating programs.

And we have also failed to do our part, closer to home, by (a) reforming the creaky operations and outdated rules of Congress, (b) imposing on ourselves the kind of ethical standards and self-restraint which the responsible and representative character of this institution requires, and (c) establishing an oversight, or "watchdog", investigating committee chaired by the minority which could stimulate a higher level of supervision and watchfulness over the Executive Branch by the majority-controlled standing committees of Congress.

These, I believe, are some of the actions Congress could -- and should -- take as soon as possible to bring the results which Chairman Mills is seeking.

...AND APPLYING THE HEAT

The need for such action was illustrated once again this week just four days before the chairman spoke out. In a commendable effort "to help find jobs and provide training for thousands of America's hard-core unemployed," the President launched still another new program -- a program poorly timed, administratively clumsy, and of questionable worth. Poorly timed, because the government should be concentrating on quality rather than quantity. Administratively clumsy, because the new program will overlap, duplicate and confuse the 21 other Federal manpower training programs on which \$2 billion a year is being spent. And of questionable worth, because the new program fails to include necessary improvements in defining jobs and identifying job openings and because it further postpones the time when a program of maximum effectiveness can replace the less useful programs. I refer to the Human Investment Act which would employ tax incentives to permit private business to provide direct on-the-job training with assurances of follow-up employment. To date, this has been the missing ingredient in Federal manpower programs: training in needed skills for specific job openings, and our bill would do more -- dollar for dollar -- to accomplish this than anything yet suggested, including the President's new program.

It is this kind of program proliferation and insensitivity to climbing costs that drove Congress in the past two weeks to apply new heat to the Administration in our efforts to achieve some economies. In rapid succession, the House (1) threatened to tie up a resolution permitting Federal agencies to spend funds at last year's levels until this year's appropriations have been approved; (2) secured a promise from the chairman of its Appropriations Committee that legislation will be brought to the floor cutting back appropriations already made; (3) suspended formally its consideration of the President's 10 percent surtax proposal until spending cutbacks have been made; and (4) sent back to House-Senate conference committee the Labor-Health, Education and Welfare Departments appropriations bill with directions to remove another \$20 million; while the Senate -- ordinarily much more generous -- rejected a committee recommendation for an extra \$2.8 billion for the poverty program.

No one can say the Administration has not been warned of Congress' determination, a determination born of the people's concern with higher taxes, higher prices, higher interest rates and lower performance of public functions.