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Florence P. Dwyer

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# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE FROM YOUR CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER - 6th District, New Jersey



1631 HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Volume V, Number 13

Thursday, July 13, 1961

Every Fourth of July, Americans have an opportunity to discover new truths about their freedoms. This year, perhaps more than any other, I rediscovered the spirit of July Fourth. It burns more brightly in more Americans, I think, than most people in public life comprehend.

A month before we left for home for the usual round of July Fourth celebrations, President Kennedy spoke to Congress in a special message on urgent national needs which concluded:

"I have not asked for a single program which did not cause one or all Americans some inconvenience, or some hardship, or some sacrifice. But they have responded - you in the Congress have responded - and I feel confident in asking today for a similar response to these new and larger demands. It is heartening to know as I journey abroad, that our country is united in its commitment to freedom - and ready to do its duty."

But immediately before Congress recessed for the Fourth of July, a Congressman from Maryland said on the House floor, not far from the spot where the President read those stirring words:

"Mr. Speaker, this bill (we are trying to pass) provides a flag or emblem for Members of Congress, for use aboard ship or on an automobile in a parade, or similar occasions. It is a small flag."

A Congressman from Iowa, capturing, I think, the spirit of the majority of the Members of the House - and certainly the way I feel about it - then asked:

"What happens to a poor devil who is not a Member of Congress who gets caught in the same storm (as a Member of Congress) and does not have the Congressional flag flying at the masthead...Do they (the Navy) go ahead and shoot him if he does not have a flag (and he tries to put into port)?...Do you mean to tell me that the distinguished Speaker of the House is going to ride through the streets in Washington or down in Texas with a 3x5 flag flapping on his automobile?...How would you fly it, above or below the squirrel tail that some people fly off their radio antennas? I think this is utter and unmitigated foolishness and I am opposed to it."

It is hard to believe that President Kennedy could have been talking about the same Congress which tried to pass such a bill when he told us that Congress has "responded" to his call for sacrifice.

And yet, few can fault the President's objectives in his repeated calls to the American people for any sacrifice necessary to the survival of freedom. If he has been criticized for this demand, it is because he has probably not been specific enough in his recommendations - how and what should we sacrifice and how much should we sacrifice, not just why we are required to sacrifice in the name of freedom.

The fault lies not with the people, I believe, because most Americans are ready to do their duty to preserve peace with honor, regardless of the dangers.

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It lies, rather, with the people in Government and the Members of Congress who pay lip service to the qualities of courage and perseverance which lie quietly within most of their countrymen, waiting to be scratched and prodded into action when the dangers are clearly explained to them. The people are, indeed, ahead of their politicians, even ahead of many of their statesmen.

At a celebration in Plainfield this Fourth of July, I learned this lesson anew.

I have never before seen this spirit as clearly as I did that day. In little ways, it seemed to me, the people greeted their independence with more fervor, waved their little flags more enthusiastically, and reflected their appreciation of what they have more than I had ever noticed before.

The crises of the day had not dulled their sense of devotion to this remarkable nation. Neither Laos, nor Cuba, nor Berlin stayed the swell of their voices.

Official Washington these days does not reflect the thinking of most Americans.

James Reston, in a memorable article in The New York Times last week, noted:

"It is part of the mythology of official Washington that the American people have a tendency during international crises either to go crazy or go fishing.

"Accordingly, half the officials here since the Berlin crisis have been concentrating on waking the people up and the other half have been concentrating on calming them down. On this basis, it's obviously going to be a hard summer...

"'Mobilization' is another (of the tall stories of the day.) All of a sudden the air is full of tales that President Kennedy is about to set in motion the vast apparatus for calling up the troops and galvanizing the Europeans to do the same. This, it is said, would really 'wake up America' and 'impress the Russians', and of course it would. The only trouble is that it isn't true..."

"Let the reader beware. Things are bad but not quite as bad as the rumors say they are. As a matter of fact, they seldom are in Washington."

Mr. Reston is right. We need a little more straight talk from this Administration to match the willingness of the people to grapple with problems which are honestly stated and reasonably explained.

And, too, the people are beyond congressional tomfoolery about special flags to salve the dignity of Members of Congress.

I believe they expect their legislators to keep step with them, even as they look to the President and the Administration, too, for the kind of leadership which the times demand.