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11-2-1967

### Report to the People Vol. 11 No. 13

Florence P. Dwyer

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CONGRESSWOMAN DWYER'S

# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

OF THE UNION-ESSEX SUBURBS



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Volume XI, Number 13

Thursday, November 2, 1967

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

When a demonstration for peace becomes a demonstration of violence, when a movement which has long preached the principles of non-violence suddenly seems to adopt the tactics of force to advance its cause, then there may be more reason for alarm than at first appears evident.

Today, one week later, the peace demonstrations in Washington are still the number-one topic of conversation in the corridors and cloak rooms surrounding the House chamber. Number one because the movement which so many had tended to see as a rational, more-or-less consistent, and morally respectable expression of opposition to the war in Vietnam was suddenly -- and shockingly -- revealed to be much more: a rather motley combination of the serious and the curious, the thoughtful and morally sincere opponents of the war with the undisciplined and dissolute souls who hardly know a war is going on, the conscientious objectors side-by-side with draft-dodgers, the scholars, hippies, concerned citizens, youthful delinquents, professional demonstrators and genuine subversives all tossed together in a massive salad of disturbed humanity in which the fewer but tangier ingredients of violence seemed to dominate the more moderate but blander majority.

## STILL NOT CONVINCED

It's hard to tell what, if any, lasting effect the demonstration will have on Congress; it has had none at all on the Administration. While a demonstration in Washington understandably leaves a firmer imprint on the Congressional consciousness than a similar display elsewhere -- especially one with such disturbing overtones -- Congress in the long run reacts more responsively to opinion back home. And that opinion has not yet been expressed in any decisive way. Though the people back home certainly share the almost unanimous sense of revulsion felt by Congressmen of virtually every persuasion, people's attitudes toward the war do not seem to have changed -- one way or the other. The minority of demonstrators who cursed and spat upon American soldiers, who forcibly stormed the Pentagon, who scrawled unprintable obscenities on walls and sidewalks, and who expressed a greater loyalty to Hanoi than to the United States, have unquestionably blackened the image of the peace movement and tainted the efforts of the more responsible who seek to change Administration policy in Vietnam. But the public's hostility toward the extremists does not yet seem to have strengthened the public's support of the Administration's position.

If this is an accurate observation, there seems to be only one explanation: the Administration's hardening deafness to even the most responsible and restrained critics of its Vietnam policy, its more aggressively negative response to all forms of dissent, its continuing refusal to consider any other path in southeast Asia than that of steady escalation of the war. In other words, people may be repelled by the viciousness of some critics of the war but they remain unconvinced that present policy will yield an early settlement.

## OTHERS ARE GUILTY

In a very real sense, what was most alarming about the Pentagon demonstration last week was its symbolic character. Violence in behalf of peace is only one manifestation of the confusion, inconsistency and selfishness which seem to have beset America. There are many others. I have already mentioned the Administration's self-centeredness about its Vietnam policy, and Congress last week showed symptoms of the disease in two unfortunate exhibitions of irresponsibility.

The first involved spending -- more specifically, a noticeable halt in the House's otherwise fairly steady insistence this year that non-essential Federal spending be reduced or eliminated at a time when severe budget deficits and potential tax hikes threaten the economy. The falter occurred over the Public Works Appropriations bill, or as it is more popularly (and somewhat unfairly) called, the "pork barrel" bill. The significant thing about it, of course, is that this bill provides for the spending of money in individual districts on projects close to the hearts of local people. Which helps to explain, perhaps, why a House which just one week earlier had climaxed its economy drive by voting to slash in one stroke no less than \$8 billion in such areas as education, health and antipovertry, could not bring itself to send the public works bill back to a House-Senate conference committee for a little more trimming.

Though I am one who believes many public works projects are extremely useful in the continuing development of our country's river and harbor resources, and though I have long and strongly supported the single most vital such project in our area -- the widening and deepening of the Newark Bay channels to Port Elizabeth and Port Newark -- I cannot see the justification for excluding such projects from the budget-paring process. And as a practical matter, can anyone honestly contend that cutting the Newark Bay project from \$1,000,000 to \$950,000 in its first year, for example, would substantially harm a project which will cost many millions and take many years to complete? Yet, such a 5 percent cut in this and every other item in the bill could have saved nearly a quarter of a billion dollars -- and at a time when even those who ordinarily favor massive Federal spending are now calling for reductions, as Governor Hughes did last week at the floating Governor's Conference.

#### IT COULDN'T BE WORSE

Of even greater significance, however, was the abject capitulation of the House to considerations of political self-interest when it approved by a one-sided vote of 241 to 105 a Congressional Redistricting bill which is almost certainly unconstitutional.

For years, Congress has been struggling with the admittedly sensitive and difficult task of writing standards which States must follow in re-shaping Congressional Districts to fit population changes. The results, however, were not worth the effort for they clash head-on with the basic Supreme Court mandate that districts should be as closely equal in population as possible -- a mandate which 32 States have obeyed since the Court's "one man, one vote" decision in 1964. Four other States -- New York, California, Indiana, and New Jersey -- are under court orders to redistrict.

Instead of setting standards to limit the population variations between districts and to assure reasonable compactness and contiguity in the shape of the districts, the final version of the redistricting bill entirely omitted both sets of standards. Ironically, both the Senate and the House had earlier passed versions of the bill which were markedly superior to the final version which came out of a conference committee which was supposed to harmonize the two. In addition to throwing out the standards -- on which the integrity of the redistricting process would depend -- the conference bill also suspended the process itself, at least until the 1970 election and probably as far in the future as 1972.

Nothing could be more unfair -- both to the States which have complied with the Court and to the people of the States which have so far refused. The bill upholds those States which continue to violate the Constitution; it preserves districts which are grossly unequal; it protects politicians who benefit from this inequality. And it demeans a House which claims to be representative. Why? In the words of one member of the House, "Sure I know this is a lousy bill, but we've got to take care of the fellows, haven't we?"

Hopefully, the Senate -- which has no vested interest in the size and shape of Congressional districts -- will defeat the bill, or the President will veto it. But if it should become law, I cannot see how the Supreme Court could avoid striking it down as unconstitutional. In such an event, irony of ironies, those who are most desperately seeking the protection of inequitable districts would be forced to run at-large throughout an entire State -- the very fate they hoped to escape by passing this bill.