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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.

FOR RELEASE
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Unemployment and commuter transportation are the two dominant problems in Union County.

This fact emerges clearly after a full week spent in the County talking with people -- people of all economic levels, from all parts of the County, people who have taken the trouble to see me in my District office during the day or in my home at night, and people by the hundreds with whom I've talked at all kinds of meetings and dances and gatherings this past week.

This has been the annual Easter recess for Congress. Traditionally, it is the pause about half way through a session of Congress during which members may return to their districts and find out what the people they represent are thinking.

Union County people, I found once again, know their problems and are determined that something be done about them.

Deteriorating Commuter Service

In terms of its direct impact on the County, the commuter transportation problem is our most serious and immediate one. Each week seems to bring further deterioration: the Weehawken ferry is abandoned; the New York Central plans to discontinue all West Shore operations; the Central of New Jersey reveals specific proposals for fewer commuter trains and higher commuter fares.

Where it will end is easily predictable. Already, some people are putting their houses up for sale and preparing to move away from Union County. The situation clearly won't improve until action is taken to assure adequate commuter transportation at fares people can afford to pay. This is a vital responsibility of Federal, State and local governments. I am, of course, prepared to cooperate with anyone in any way toward this end.

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The day Congress adjourned for its Easter recess, I made a statement in the Congressional Record reviewing the proposals I have offered and urging my colleagues to think about them seriously and come back prepared to start some action.

This week, as we re-assemble, I shall again press the appropriate committees to schedule action on these four projects: a tax exemption for the costs of transportation to and from work; a change in the Interstate Commerce Act to require public hearings and full consideration of the public interest in proposed passenger train discontinuances; a study of the ways in which the various levels of government in the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut metropolitan area can cooperate to solve the commuter problem; and a Constitutional amendment prohibiting States from taxing non-residents.

You can help me with these projects. If you will write me and explain how much you need these changes, how expensive and inconvenient commuting has become, I shall take your testimony directly to the committees involved and demonstrate how critically action is needed now.

Since, as you may have noticed, a House Judiciary Subcommittee has scheduled a hearing late this month on my proposal to stop State taxation of non-residents, your evidence will be a major part of my testimony there.

Increasing Unemployment

The unemployment situation in Union County -- as prosperous and busy as most of the area is -- is causing many people deep concern. The latest available figures show that our part of the State has been an exception to the general trend of gradual economic improvement. While unemployment in other areas has gone down a little, it has actually increased in the Newark-Union County area over the same period a year ago.

There is no question about the reason. Over the past 12 months, we have seen several industries move out of our area.

The statistics indicate that New Jersey has lagged substantially behind the rest of the country in recovering from last year's recession. Compared with a nationwide rate of 6.1 percent of the labor force unemployed, New Jersey's rate is 8.8 percent. And within New Jersey, the Newark-Union County area is a specially difficult problem.

Unfortunately, the cold statistics fail to bring to life the reality of unemployment -- the uncertainty of the future, the piling up of overdue bills, the embarrassment of borrowing heavily, and the actual tightening of belts. For those without jobs, without security of any kind, prosperity in other places and for other people has a hollow sound.

It seems to me that here is a place and a purpose where the labor-management cooperation so many of us have urged could be most helpful. Union County could begin what Washington has so far failed to do. A conference of local industrialists, union leaders and leaders of various civic groups could -- if they really put their minds to it -- do some hard thinking about the economic future of Union County. And a lot of hard thinking and realistic planning will be required to pave the way for the industry and the jobs our people need now and in the years ahead.

Looking to Washington

While the problems of commuter transportation and unemployment can and must be attacked from three levels -- Trenton, Washington and locally -- people are looking to the Federal Government alone, as Constitutionally they must, for the difficult answers to our foreign policy and defense questions.

Time and again, people have asked me how seriously Washington takes the Berlin crisis, and they wonder what our Government's plans are, and how well prepared we are, militarily, to defend our position there. But underneath this sense of uncertainty, there is an unflinching determination not to yield, and a willingness to do whatever is necessary to back up this determination.

The ruthless show of force by the Communist Chinese in destroying what remained of Tibetan independence has only confirmed us in our knowledge that communism is brutal totalitarianism and that to survive we must stay strong.

Congress has returned to Washington with a fresher understanding of what we must do. We know our people are united on the big problems. We know what they want and what they need. It's now up to us.