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Florence P. Dwyer

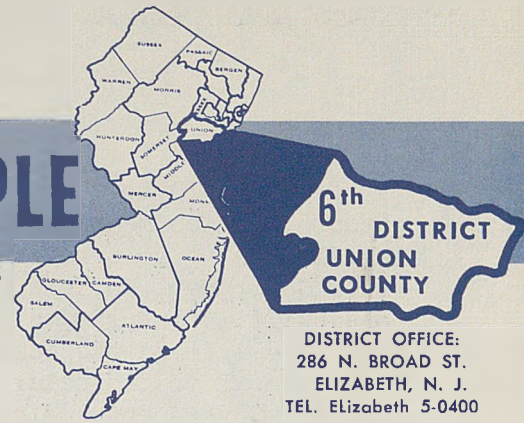
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CONGRESSWOMAN DWYER'S

REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

OF UNION COUNTY



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GETTING READY TO GO

With my fingers carefully crossed, I shall dare to predict that this issue of my newsletter will probably be the last of my regular reports for the first session of the 89th Congress -- to be followed, after Congress adjourns, with a final wrap-up, review and analysis of the record of this first session.

While I've been wrong before about adjournment dates, all the signs now indicate that the Congress -- or at least the House -- will complete its business within the next several days, possibly by the end of this week or sometime next week. If the slower-moving Senate cannot meet such a schedule, the House will probably recess for several days at a time until the Senate catches up. By law, both houses must adjourn at the same time.

It's been a long and busy session, perhaps the busiest, in terms of legislative production, in recent history. With hardly a break in its pace, the House has been working steadily since January, and the urge among most members for a few days' rest and time to reestablish contact with the people they represent is intense. In my own case -- with important legislation under active consideration on the floor of the House, day after day, week after week -- I have had to refuse or cancel far more meetings and speaking engagements than I've been able to accept. As disappointing as this has been to me, personally, I know that you who have sent me to Washington expect me to remain on the job and this is a responsibility I take very seriously.

A DAY LIKE NONE OTHER

It is impossible, I suppose, to measure in concrete terms the impact of Pope Paul VI's historic visit to the United States and the United Nations -- the first in the 20 centuries of the Papacy. His message was not addressed exclusively to Americans but, through the agency of the U.N., to all men everywhere. It dealt not with immediate political issues but with the overriding purpose of peace on earth and with the underlying conditions, including those of an essentially spiritual nature, which must be present before peace can be achieved.

It would be easy to dismiss the Pope's words as unattainable idealism. And if easy dismissal is, in fact, the world's response, then peace will remain as far distant as it is today. But the idealism of Paul VI was anchored firmly in a realistic understanding of what peace entails: a recognition of the horrors of nuclear warfare, a conviction in the minds of men that peace is worth working for, a more equitable distribution of the world's resources, progress toward ridding the world of offensive weapons, a willingness to negotiate equably and in good faith, the slow, determined, step-by-step movement forward. His plea, too, for support of the United Nations and for those reforms which will make it a stronger and more effective force in the world demonstrated that his is a practical idealism.

Monday, October 4, was, as many have noted, a day like none other in history. There is goodness and love in people and Pius VI seemed to bring these often hidden qualities to the surface. If we will only heed his words -- here and in the farthest corners of the world -- and hear our people, the course of history may be changed.

THE GRAY OF COMPROMISE

The picture of the frail man of God on the podium of the United Nations may seem a world removed from the noisy hurly-burly of the House of Representatives in debate. But it's the very same world -- the world in which the good and bad, the black and white, mix and merge into a confusing gray. Yet, out of the gray of mixed motives and clashing interests legislation sometimes emerges which, while far from perfect, represents reasonable compromise and solid progress. Two such bills, passed by the House in recent days, were the Federal employees pay raise bill and the Highway Beautification bill.

The 370 to 7 margin by which the House passed the pay raise bill indicates the extent to which members of both parties were in agreement on the basic purpose of the legislation -- to obtain closer comparability between the salaries paid to postal and other Government workers and those paid to persons doing similar jobs with like responsibilities in private industry. The increase was modest and fully justified. While the House trimmed the committee-reported bill somewhat, the major controversy centered on the proposal to tie salary increases for Members of Congress to the pay raises for rank-and-file Government employees.

I strongly opposed this proposal -- because Congress had no business using a legitimate raise for employees as an excuse to obtain an unneeded increase for itself; because the comparability principle did not apply to Congressional salaries; and because a further increase for Congressmen, coming on top of last year's raise, was "untimely" to say the least.

PUBLIC OPINION COUNTS

This view, unfortunately, did not seem to be shared by the majority of my colleagues in the House, but since it did reflect the feelings of people generally, Congressional awareness of the power of public opinion was what saved the day. On the first vote -- in which Members were not recorded by name -- the House defeated an attempt to eliminate the Congressional pay increase by 111 to 135. We were successful, however, in demanding a roll call vote (with each Member publicly recorded), and the House rather dramatically reversed itself, voting 238 to 140 to exclude Congress from the raise.

The influence of public opinion was at work, too, to guarantee passage of the Highway Beautification bill. Here again, there was little disagreement about the primary objective of the bill, to remove the clutter of billboards and junkyards from America's major highways and reenforce the right of the nation's motorists to enjoy the country's natural beauty.

There was controversy, of course -- over the cost of the bill, over the question of State versus Federal controls, over the effect on roadside small business, over the manner in which the bill was brought to the floor. But in the end, the process of compromise served to diminish the differences and the House made its decision. These were the principal grounds: the Federal Government pays the big share of the highway construction bill; States have had lots of time in which to clean up Federal highways on their own but many have failed to do so; the people now demand it. The bill recognizes the proper role of the States and provides sufficient flexibility for wise administration; but it moves in only one direction -- toward highways that reveal, rather than destroy, natural beauty.

In our own State of New Jersey, we have an excellent example of Congress' objective in our Garden State Parkway. Like the Highway Beautification bill, it, too, was the product of people who cared -- members of the garden clubs and like-minded groups and individuals -- to whom nature and beauty are precious and irreplaceable.