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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

by CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER



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As the warm spring weather of Washington envelops the Capitol here, the political temperature inside this building also rises.

With heated issues like defense reorganization, unemployment compensation, foreign aid, reciprocal trade and anti-recession measures dominating the front pages, it's easy to miss some of the other less dramatic conflagrations.

Let me mention just a few.

No more serious situation faces our people than the problem of juvenile delinquency. This has been emphasized by last week's report from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover showing the sharp increase in the rate of teen-age crime and by the recent report of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency.

In a generally excellent report, however, Subcommittee Chairman Senator Hennings has omitted any discussion of what seems to many a major factor in juvenile delinquency - the high and growing rate of teen-age drinking.

Many of you may remember my interest in this question, and my efforts over the past few years to help reduce and control such drinking, especially in our own area. Our problem, as you know, revolves in large part around New York State's stubborn resistance to the appeals which have been made by other States along its borders, including New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont, to raise the legal drinking age from 18 to 21.

Just last year, during a hearing of our Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations in New York City, I asked Mayor Wagner about his experience. He indicated emphatically that the easy availability of liquor was a major cause of teen-age crime and delinquency. He was not, unfortunately, able to explain why New York has been unwilling to help itself and its neighbors.

With the Mayor's testimony in mind, I discussed the matter with Senator Hennings and arranged to testify before his Subcommittee when it considered New York's juvenile

delinquency situation. The Chairman's illness, however, forced the cancellation of most of these hearings.

The Subcommittee is continuing to gather material about New York's juvenile delinquency problem and will issue a report later this year. I have, therefore, again written Senator Hennings to stress the seriousness of teen-age drinking both within and along the borders of New York State. I have urged him to give this aspect of juvenile delinquency the extensive consideration it should have. And I have requested that, if his experience confirms ours, he recommend to the State of New York that the legal drinking age be lifted to 21.

There is good news on a related problem. The House Judiciary Committee has favorably reported legislation to make more effective the Federal prohibitions against mailing and transporting obscene and crime-inciting materials. This is a companion bill to the one I recently introduced, and about which I wrote to the Committee.

I have also added my voice to those requesting that the majority leadership schedule the bill for early action on the House floor. I am optimistic that this will be done, because it is widely agreed that the bill is a good one. It will be effective by permitting prosecutions at the point where obscene materials are received as well as where they are mailed. And, since it is carefully drawn, it meets the criteria suggested by the Supreme Court for legislation in this touchy field, where civil rights also must be protected.

Another of my subcommittees has been holding morning and afternoon sessions this past week looking into the proposed sale of the Government's big \$80 million nickel plant in Cuba. Built during World War II to increase our supply of this scarce metal, the plant has been a major Government investment. The Subcommittee's job is to assure that the Government gets the best possible price and thereby protects the taxpayers' huge investment.

This case is not so simple as it sounds, however. It involves the available supply of nickel ore, the price of this ore, the conflicting interests of several potential buyers of the plant, and the twisted, complicated status of the negotiations to date.

You may have seen this story on some of the front pages lately, but the facts are not yet settled and any final judgment is out of the question right now.

Controversy has also been the keynote to recent activities of our Veterans' Affairs Committee. This time it's the thorny problem of Veterans' Administration hospitals and the policies governing the number of beds to be provided for veterans who can't afford and can't find private hospital care.

The Committee has noted that VA hospital beds have been withdrawn and are often not being replaced, which, of course, reduces the space available for veterans who need hospital care. The Administration's policies in this respect are unclear, so the Committee unanimously has requested the President to clarify them.

It is well known that we are faced with a shortage of hospitals of all kinds, and the Government has for some time been engaged in promoting and assisting hospital construction. This is no time, then, to reduce the facilities which we already have in existing VA hospitals.

We hope that agreement between Congress and the President can be reached on an adequate program which will meet the need for VA hospitals.

Looking back over these sometimes endless problems, I was reminded of the constituent recently who asked why so few Congressmen were present on the floor of the House one afternoon.

Perhaps the Girl Scouts from Summit and New Providence, who visited Washington last week, could answer the question. They finally found me with my fellow Subcommittee members hidden away in a hearing room down a side corridor of the House Office Building, trying to learn what, in a particular instance, was in the best interests of the Government and the people.