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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.

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Thursday, August 10, 1961

Capitol Hill has kept both eyes on the twists and turns of the dangerous world situation this past week. In doing so, Congress has acted quickly to bolster our country's military and political position. At the same time, a greater awareness is developing here that we must begin concentrating our efforts and resources on the things that count, the projects and objectives which will determine our strength and staying-power in the long and difficult struggle ahead.

As rich and powerful as our country undoubtedly is, there are limits to our resources and to the capacity of the Government to raise and spend money for purposes which, while desirable, perhaps, are not at all essential.

The feeling is growing that we can waste precious time and attention on trivial matters unless - like athletes preparing for a championship contest - we prepare ourselves for the fundamental threat to our way of life. This involves nothing less than the preservation of liberty, here and throughout the free world. Liberty has always had its foes, always been under attack by power-mad tyrants and those who fear human freedom. But today's tyranny is a new, more efficient and powerful machine, headquartered in Moscow, which has spread its poison farther and more deeply than any in the previous history of mankind.

The demands upon the American people - on whose nerves and judgment and unflinching sense of high purpose the outcome of this struggle depends - are such that all lesser concerns must shrink in size and significance.

Deeply involved

Just to skim over the events of the past week which have gripped the minds of official Washington will indicate the extent of our involvement. Both Washington and Moscow, for example, pursued the daily war of nerves over Berlin, emphasizing new military preparations while holding the door open to possible future negotiations. The tragic French-Tunisian battle over Bizerte further weakened the effectiveness of France as a NATO ally and created new turmoil in the decisive African continent of new nations. The communist government of Cuba continued its harassment of the United States and the highjacking of American commercial aircraft, which must be presumed to have originated in Havana, has led the U.S. to seek redress through the United Nations and to consider seriously a total economic embargo against Cuba.

Here in Congress, in quick response to the sense of urgent purpose which is shared by Members of both parties, action was speeded on the President's requests for the means with which to support our country's interests. The House by a vote of 403 to 2 authorized the President to order to active duty members and units of the Ready Reserve of the armed forces. Soon after, the House unanimously, 406 to 0, authorized \$3.5 billion in additional appropriations for aircraft, missiles, naval vessels and conventional forces.

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Congress leads President

The Cuban situation was a source of growing concern among my colleagues here. Congress, I believe, is somewhat ahead of the President in proposing stronger measures than have so far been used to deal with Castro. Any proposal the President may make to cut off all economic contacts with Cuba, even to the point of blockading the island, will, I feel certain, gain the support of Congress. Our people will not tolerate an armed communist camp, obviously aggressive, so close to our own shores. And we in Congress reflect this feeling.

The cost of meeting these world-wide threats to our security, the cost of continued preparedness to defend ourselves against aggression in all its forms, is high- high in terms of money, resources and people. Long ago, however, we committed ourselves as a Nation to the pursuit of liberty and the defense of freedom and I do not believe we are going to back down now.

What we can and should do, in order to make certain we can meet these costs, is to be sure we are allocating our resources properly and assigning priority to projects which are of first importance. Otherwise, we shall invite inflation and undermine the economic strength which supports our military and diplomatic position.

Need for priorities

In an attempt to move ahead in this direction, I introduced two bills recently which I believe can help to establish necessary priorities. Hearings began before a House subcommittee on one of the bills, a measure to require that new Federal grants-in-aid to States and local communities be reviewed at least every five years by Congressional committees to see whether the programs are producing worthwhile results, whether they should be changed to meet more important needs, or whether they should be eliminated entirely. Too often, such programs go on indefinitely, creating special interests and draining money away long after they have served a useful purpose. Under my bill Federal, State and local officials would have to prove to Congress periodically that their programs were worthwhile and contributing significantly to the national welfare.

My other bill would re-direct funds already authorized for local public works projects, such as water supply and sewerage systems, to the vastly more important objective of preventing the collapse of urban mass transportation and saving the country's principal economic centers from slow strangulation.

Of the \$650 million approved by Congress this year for loans to communities, only \$50 million was reserved for a new mass transportation program in large metropolitan areas. My bill would correct this imbalance by earmarking \$350 million for mass transportation and \$300 million for other public works. It would not, by the way, add a single dollar to the Federal budget, but it would require that money already voted by Congress be spent for priority purposes.

As those of us know, who have lived in such heavily concentrated industrial, financial and commercial centers as the New York-New Jersey area, our economy cannot flourish, our defenses cannot be mobilized, our world-wide commitments to freedom cannot be met without an efficient transportation system. This is a matter of top priority.