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### Report to the People Vol. 2 No. 20

Florence P. Dwyer

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# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

by CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER



Volume II, Number 20.

For Release:  
Thursday, June 5, 1958.

Show-down time is fast approaching on several big issues here in the Congress. Reciprocal trade and reorganization of the Defense Department are the biggest and the closest to the point of decision in the House.

But there are others. We haven't heard the last of taxes, especially the possibility of excise tax reductions, school construction and other educational proposals, appropriations for defense and for mutual security, legislative relief for the railroads, and many others.

In another sense, too, it was show-down time recently in Miami, Florida, where the chief executives of the States met for their regular Governor's Conference. From the standpoint of one who, like myself, is anxious that States make a greater effort to handle more of their problems themselves, the Conference was disappointing.

Despite all their talk about shifting more responsibility from the Federal to State governments, on practically every major issue - to the degree it received serious thought at all - the response was another vigorous call for Federal help. As Arthur Sylvester, the distinguished correspondent of the Newark News, said, the Governor's policy statement on Federal-State relations "reads as if it had been written in wool."

From all reports, more real problems were carefully avoided than were squarely met. Not a word, for instance, of the States' responsibility in matters of civil rights and racial discrimination. And what plans were made to handle the growing problem of how best to help those unemployed exhausting their insurance benefits, or those with no benefits to exhaust?

It may be a symptom of the times, but this Governors' Conference seems to have reached a new low in its failure to accept responsibility. Perhaps, it might be suggested, because it reached a new high in its absorption with the political prospects of all the self-avowed presidential possibilities who gathered there.



But politics, when divorced from the real purpose of politics--that is, to produce good government--can look pretty muddy.

I was reminded of this truth last week, in an altogether different context, when Representatives and Senators gathered in the huge rotunda of the Capitol Building to pay homage to the Unknown Servicemen of World War II and the Korean War. The ceremony was utterly simple. All attention was riveted on the two flag-draped caskets standing beneath the towering dome of the Capitol, representing as they did the hundreds of thousands of Americans who died in the wars we fought for freedom and opportunity.

#### Responsibility accepted

These Americans knew what they were fighting and dying for and freely accepted the obligation to defend their country. The obligation is no less heavy in peacetime on all citizens and especially on those they choose to represent them. To understand what is necessary to protect our freedom and to increase opportunity for all our people, and to work unselfishly to achieve it--nothing less is required.

Between the idea and the reality, however, and from the need to the action, there is often a long and tangled way. The action of the House last week in approving statehood for Alaska illustrated the fact all too convincingly.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that Alaska is ready to be a State, and despite the long years we have promised it, it first took an extraordinary parliamentary device to bring the legislation to the floor, by-passing the hostile House Rules Committee. Once on the floor, the bill ran into all the arguments--good, bad and indifferent--which opponents could throw against it. Working together in an odd kind of coalition, opponents all but defeated the bill in a preliminary vote, 144 to 106. This was a teller vote, in which members are not recorded by name. And the apparent defeat was made possible because some supporters of statehood were not as diligent as were opponents in staying on the floor and watching every move.

#### Hard work required

The vote was reversed, of course, on the next day's roll-call 208 to 166. But only because statehood for Alaska is a sufficiently popular issue to demand a roll-call, a recorded vote. Otherwise, the measure would now be dead--dead because too few members are willing, sometimes, to take the time and trouble to follow everything as carefully as it must be followed.

True, it's hard work and very time-consuming. The House usually meets every week-day, in addition to the endless committee work and the problems of constituents. But this is the business of all the people of our country. It can't be neglected, any more than a soldier or a sailor or an airman can turn his back in time of war.