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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

by CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER



Volume I, Number 29.

August 29, 1957.

As I write this Report, the adjournment date of this session of Congress still is cloaked in uncertainty and confusion. Major roadblocks still exist on Civil Rights and Foreign Aid legislation, and a number of important bills remain untouched.

Perhaps Congress may be on its way home by the time this Report is printed, but no one knows. Too many "ifs" cloud the scene.

Only one thing is certain: Although the humid summer heat that has blanketed the Capitol is easing, the pressure of partisan politics is rising with each passing day.

Certainly, the behind-the-scenes political maneuvering that has created an ever-widening gulf between the White House and the Congress is unfortunate. It is an unhealthy condition which too often encourages the placing of partisan interests above the national interest.

CLOAKROOM TALK

For example, talk in the House cloakrooms these days is concentrated on which party should get credit for Civil Rights legislation, and not on the responsibility of Congress to make sure that every American is a first class citizen with adequate protection of the right to vote.

It seems to me that the objective of Civil Rights is being lost in this constant maneuvering for political gain.

Such petty bickering over who should get the credit is not in the national interest; it only serves to weaken and discredit the just cause of Civil Rights to which both parties are pledged.

There has been too much political exploiting of the honest differences of opinion that have arisen on this issue. After all, a dedication to the sacred rights of American citizenship is not the private preserve of any political party. I believe it is time for Congress to quit politicking and once more set its sights on the basic objective of enacting a fair and effective Civil Rights law.

FOREIGN AID ISSUE

The most recent issue of Roll Call - the newspaper of Capitol Hill - remarks that "the fate of the foreign aid bill has been so uncertain this year that some of the Hill speculators are referring to it as the Pari-Mutual Security Bill."

Unhappily, such a quip contains more than a smattering of fact, for the Mutual Security controversy - just as in the case of Civil Rights - has been marked by confusion and considerable political jockeying.

At this point, Mutual Security stands as the much-kicked "football" of the 85th Congress.

President Eisenhower, in his January budget message to Congress, requested \$4.4 billion for Mutual Security. Later, in his appropriations request, he lowered the figure to \$3.8 billion.

The Senate, in acting on the Mutual Security authorization bill, approved a \$3.6 billion figure. The House, in turn, cut it to \$3.1 billion, but after a joint House-Senate Conference a \$3.3 billion compromise was reached.

STILL IN DOUBT

This \$3.3 billion authorization measure was enacted into law. However, when the House then began work on the Mutual Security appropriations bill - the legislation which backs up the authorization with actual cash - it appropriated only \$3.1 billion, or \$200 million less than the authorization.

As this badly slashed appropriations bill went to the Senate, President Eisenhower warned that such a severe cut would seriously endanger our national security. He urged that the Senate restore the full \$3.3 billion.

Senate President Lyndon Johnson, however, has seemed reluctant to bring the appropriations up to the authorization level agreed to earlier by the Senate. This sudden change of policy by the Senate leader raises certain questions:

Is the gentleman from Texas now admitting that the Senate didn't know what it was doing earlier when it raised spending levels in the authorization bill? If so, why didn't it at that time seek to determine the need, instead of waiting for this last-minute action?

Personally, I think the real question is: Who is passing the buck to who?

CONFUSION IN HOUSE

An incident that occurred in the House the other day dramatically demonstrated the general confusion that has gripped the Congress during these days of "adjournment fever."

An amendment was offered on a "pork barrel" public works bill. The amendment purportedly dealt with some pet project in Iowa, and when a roll call began there was an impressive economy showing, with members from both sides of the aisle voting "nay" on the legislation.

Near the end of the roll call, however, Democrats suddenly discovered that a "nay" vote not only eliminated the Iowa project, but also cut out nearly \$500,000 for the Columbia River Basin project -- one of the favorite projects of my colleagues from the other side of the aisle.

VOTE CHANGES

The House then witnessed an almost unprecedented scene, according to old-timers on the Hill, as 93 Members hurried to the well of the House to announce that they were changing their votes from "nay" to "aye."

Even with that large-scale shift of votes, the pork barrel amendment was defeated. At that point, Rep. Cannon of Missouri sought to have a review of the defeated amendment, but he was ruled out of order by Speaker Rayburn, who declared:

"I've had enough funny business here today!"

Speaker Rayburn's observation - which, incidentally, did not appear in the Record of the session - certainly would prompt a freshman Member to ask:

"What's going on in this greatest law-making body in the world?"