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Florence P. Dwyer

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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE FROM YOUR CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER - 6th District, New Jersey

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1631 HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

FOR RELEASE:
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By the time you read this, the House may have voted on the most controversial legislation of recent years, a labor reform bill.

Since I have been in Congress, I have received more mail on this issue than on any other. It has come from all parts of Union County and from all economic groups, including a great many union members themselves. All have demanded that effective action be taken to protect the rights of unions, their members and the general public from the violence and corruption and gangsterism that have threatened organized labor and the country.

But as I write this report, the situation is still not clear. It is impossible to predict with certainty either the order in which the several different labor bills will be considered or the amendments that may be offered to them. In such a situation, due to the involved legislative procedure in the House, it is often impossible even to obtain consideration of particular amendments or provisions.

As a result, legislation here is frequently processed on an all-or-nothing-at-all basis. In this respect House procedure differs from Senate procedure. In the Senate, there are virtually no limitations to the number or kind of amendments which any member may offer.

This fact is extremely important in cases of legislation so complicated as the labor reform bill. Each version of this legislation - and there are at least five major ones - contains hundreds of provisions. It is safe to assume that no two members of the House, if given an opportunity to write their own legislation, would agree on exactly the same provisions.

Time for Decision

Nevertheless, when it comes time to vote this week, every member will be required either (1) to accept certain provisions he personally opposes in order to get others he considers more important, or (2) to reject provisions he favors in order to defeat others he believes would be unwise.

Because this take-it-or-leave-it procedure sometimes makes compromise impossible, it has sometimes resulted in the total defeat of worthwhile legislation. Last year, for

instance, a labor reform bill was brought to the House floor which some members considered too weak and others too strong. Both these groups combined, for opposite reasons, to defeat it, though the bill itself was a moderate and in many ways an effective reform measure.

I voted for that bill in the conviction that we needed legislation to get rid of the crooks and gangsters who have infiltrated the labor movement and who have exploited and perverted the legitimate interests of union members for their own personal gain.

Since that time, the further disclosures of the McClellan Committee have added much new evidence that the need today is greater than ever. As AFL-CIO President George Meany told the committee, "Before the Senate hearings we did not know one one-hundredth of corruption existing in the labor movement."

Despite the differences of opinion within organized labor as to what constitutes a good labor reform bill, every responsible union leader has admitted that legislation is necessary.

By and large, it has been the unions outside the AFL-CIO where violence and corruption has flourished. Yet, all of organized labor, as well as the public welfare, is adversely affected by abuse of power, by misappropriation of funds, by collusion, intimidation, blackmail picketing and coercion of all kinds.

Control of Power

Organized labor has made great contributions to the growth and prosperity of our country. But like big business in the 1920's and 1930's, big labor has accumulated immense power - much of it unregulated and therefore subject to abuse. As with big business then, it is now in the interests of organized labor itself to accept certain regulations which experience has shown are necessary.

Reasonable regulations will not hurt organized labor. They will not reduce their bargaining power in labor-management negotiations. Decent and honorable union officials have nothing to fear from regulations which protect the rights of their memberships or which require public accounting of union funds or assure democratic procedures in union elections.

You may remember the screams of "anti-business" which came from some business leaders when Congress passed legislation governing the issuance of securities and the operation of stock exchanges. These regulations protected stockholders and the public and assured prospective investors that all relevant facts about a corporation's financial condition and the terms of proposed stock issues should be made public. Rather than hurting business, these regulations brought new respect and confidence and greatly strengthened legitimate business interests.

In the same way, it is being charged that those who vote for a strong labor reform bill are "anti-labor". But organized labor, too, can benefit from the same kind of assurance which an effective labor reform bill will bring to the general public. Neither business nor labor exists in a vacuum. The activities of each affect all our people directly and forcefully. The public has a right to demand proper controls over the power of both, and to seek assurance that their safety and welfare as individuals will be protected.

Which Bill?

There remains, of course, the key question of what labor reform bill will do the best job of guaranteeing the rights of union members, of eliminating corruption and gangsterism, and of controlling other abuses.

I am remaining in Washington this weekend for the purpose of answering that question. The text of one of the principal labor reform proposals was made public yesterday. Before I cast my vote, therefore, I want to go through each one of the alternatives, study every provision, and decide which bill or combination of bills will best answer the country's needs.

Whatever the bill, I believe it should deal effectively with these important areas: protection of the rights of union members, reporting and disclosure of union finances, prohibition of blackmail and coercive picketing, outlawing of "hot cargo" agreements and other secondary boycotts, and a solution to the "No Man's Land" jurisdictional problem.

Since each of the bills which will receive serious consideration contains provisions dealing with these matters, I want to be sure which bill contains the fairest and most effective remedies.

After I complete my own study of the bills, I shall listen carefully to the debate on the House floor. When I vote, it will be an informed vote, a vote which to the best of my ability will serve the best interests of all our people.