

Kean University

Kean Digital Learning Commons

Florence Dwyer Report to the People Newsletter 1959 Florence Dwyer Report to the People Newsletter

8-27-1959

Report to the People Vol. 3 No. 34

Florence P. Dwyer

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kean.edu/cp_dwyer_newsletters_1959

REPORT TO THE PEOPLE
FROM YOUR CONGRESSWOMAN

FLORENCE P. DWYER - 6th District, New Jersey



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

FOR RELEASE:

Volume III, Number 34

Thursday, August 27, 1959

With James B. Carey's declaration of war last week against House members who voted for the Landrum-Griffin labor reform bill, it might almost be said that the 1960 Congressional campaign is already underway.

If the Carey letter is typical, it will be a tough and bitter battle -- and an unfortunate one so far as the public interest is concerned. Carey's promise of political retaliation was based on the false assumption that Congressmen must go 100% of the way with organized labor, regardless of the merits of issues, or else be considered an enemy of working people.

It is undoubtedly true that some Members of Congress fit this formula. They are either undeviatingly pro-labor and anti-business or pro-business and anti-labor. For them, issues like the Landrum-Griffin bill are easy: they are either for it or against it, without qualification and even without the need to study the legislation. Their positions are fixed far in advance of the issues themselves.

But what about those Congressmen who belong neither to labor or business, who conscientiously seek the public interest in issues as they arise, who understand that business and labor are interdependent and essential parts of the American system and that we need to keep both sides strong and healthy?

It has always seemed to me that this is the proper role of representatives in Congress, to represent all the people and to base one's actions on what is best for the country and the people as a whole. For those who try to reach this ideal, every major issue like the labor reform bill becomes an occasion for careful study and deep soul-searching. Finding the public interest is seldom simple, and following your conscience and trying to be fair is never easy.

The People Will Decide

Nevertheless, this is what people have a right to expect, and it's the kind of representation I believe they do expect.

- more -

Since Mr. Carey has raised the issue, however, the question is up to the people of Union County. They know my record and have generously supported me in the past. They shall be the judges. Therefore, I am distributing with this week's Report to the People copies of Mr. Carey's letter to me. And I shall let the people decide who is right.

Last week's aftermath of the labor reform debate included other significant results. Not least among them has been the confusing effort of some members to explain how they could be for and against a strong labor reform bill at the same time. Seventy-four members, you may recall, who voted against the Landrum-Griffin substitute on the first and crucial vote (thus satisfying labor), turned about once it was clear the bill would pass and voted for the Landrum-Griffin measure on the final roll-call. Since then, some have been busy assuring labor lobbyists that their first vote was the important one, while at the same time writing their constituents that their second vote is the one that should count.

In private, however, some of them reveal their painful dilemma. One Congressman, a Democrat from the West, came to me in the House chamber last week and voluntarily explained how ashamed he was for allowing himself to be intimidated into voting against the Landrum-Griffin bill. He seemed sincerely heart-broken, but he recognized that labor's political power is immense. And he, like most of us here, would prefer to remain in Congress.

Progress on Legislation

Despite appearances, however, the labor reform controversy was not the sole occupation of the House last week. Three matters of special interest to me were successfully advanced, I am pleased to report.

One was an amendment to the so-called P.L. 480 program, under which we sell large amounts of our surplus agricultural commodities to foreign countries where crop failures and starvation are major problems. The terms are long-range and generous and the program has been an important arm of our foreign policy.

Nevertheless, our farm surpluses continue to pile up and cost taxpayers hundreds of millions for storage alone. To help dispose of these surpluses, and to help assure that American children (many of whom, despite our present prosperity, are hungry and constantly undernourished) also get enough to eat, the amendment liberalizes the existing program through which some surplus foods are distributed to the needy and the unemployed.

The broad support for this amendment was indicated by the almost 2 to 1 vote by which it passed. From the extensive debate on the amendment, it was apparent that

many members feel very strongly that we must not neglect the health and welfare of our own people while helping those in other countries. Proper nutrition and balanced diets for children who, without our surplus foods, would go without, is certainly worthy of our attention.

Success at Last

Another worthy cause progressed as far as the White House last week when the Senate passed my bill to permit the refugee son of a Hillside, N.J., family to enter the United States.

Many of you remember the story of Harry Levenstein. At age 11, he fled into Soviet Russia in advance of the German armies invading Poland. His mother, brother, and two sisters were killed in Nazi extermination camps. His father was liberated by American troops in 1945, came to the United States and became a citizen, still believing that all his family had perished. Young Harry, meanwhile, was sent to a slave labor camp in Siberia where he spent 19 years. Last year, as an invalid, he was permitted to return to Poland where an old family friend put him in touch with his father.

Since that time, for nearly 14 months, we have been trying to bring him to this country. Every hopeful break seemed to be followed by a heart-breaking disappointment. We succeeded in obtaining a special refugee visa only to discover that a physical exam showed the possibility of tuberculosis.

Finally, last May, a private bill became the last possibility. Once it was introduced, however, colleagues in the House and Senate cooperated generously and the bill was speeded through subcommittees, committees and the House and Senate. Last week, the Senate gave its final approval and I expect the President to sign it this week before leaving for Europe.

Another of my bills, to create an Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, also neared the end of the long and involved legislative process when the House passed it by the encouraging vote of 335 to 31.

It was a very satisfying experience to participate in the development of this important legislation right from the beginning. Once formed, the Commission may even help solve our tangled transit problems.