



ED ESHLEMAN'S WASHINGTON REPORT

In general, the mail coming into a congressional office reflects the real concerns of the American people, or at least a segment of the American people.

My mail since the opening of the 93rd Congress in January has covered a variety of important topics. It may be of interest to many of you what the main subjects have been in communications reaching me in the past six months.

The number one topic as measured by the sheer volume of mail into my office is the question of whether vitamins should become prescription drug items. This is obviously a concern that has not been a big front page story, but is on the mind of an awful lot of people. The letters are overwhelmingly against any Food and Drug Administration action to make vitamins available only by prescription, and favor legislation similar to that I have introduced that would prohibit any such FDA action.

Another big issue as reflected by mail is the rising cost-of-living and problems related to the inflationary spiral. Food prices, in particular, have disturbed housewives, and they have contacted me about their desire to see government take positive steps toward stopping the upward surge in grocery costs. However, once government had acted and the price lid began to bring on talk of food shortages, I started to hear from people unhappy about the prospect of being unable to get food items. This is exactly the kind of problem-creating-problem situation that occurs under any wage-price control program. It is almost certain to make this a major issue for months to come.

The energy crisis is the next ranking issue in my mail. People are concerned about gas shortages, fuel oil shortages for home heating and electrical power problems during the summer months. Some of that correspondence has indicated a belief that the major oil companies have purposely brought on the crisis to advance some of their own interests—the one thing mentioned often is the Alaskan pipeline. Congress is now conducting studies into precisely that point, so all constituents must be expressing similar sentiments.

There has been a rather large volume of mail in opposition to giving food stamps for strikers. As I write this column, the House of Representatives is voting on that matter, and my vote will be cast against any further food stamp program for people voluntarily out on strike.

Pension questions in one form or another have accounted for a good bit of the mail. These questions have included pension reforms now being debated in the Education and Labor Committee on which I serve. There also have been requests for changes and-or increases in veterans benefits,

Things to Come

Airlines, Amtrak and travel agencies are indicating increases in commercial vacation travel, reflecting impact of gasoline shortage. Most frequent comment from callers making reservations: "We usually go by car, but don't want to take any chances on being stranded." On the other hand, one expert in the field notes that because of rises in costs of auto ownership -- maintenance, fuel, insurance and parking -- the car-rental business may boom.

the railroad retirement program and Social Security. Of course, Congress, just before its July recess, did approve a new Social

Security increase effective July 1, 1974. With this increase, Social Security has gone up 76 percent in seven years.

You will notice that this list does not include the Watergate issue which has literally been dominating national news coverage. But I, personally, have received only 25 letters on the subject, both pro and con, which compares to the over 1000 pieces of correspondence on the vitamin issue.

\$22,500 Lost As Quarryville

Barn Burns

A barn and its contents valued at \$22,500 were destroyed by fire Wednesday at Christiana RD1, about 12 miles east of Quarryville.

The Bart Fire Co. responded to

the alarm about 1:14 p.m. Fire companies from Quarryville, Cochranville and Oxford were called for assistance.

Water had to be hauled from three miles away to fight the blaze.

According to Norman Hart, Bart fire chief, the barn and nearby vacant house that was unharmed, is owned by Norman W. Rissel. Hart said there was farm machinery, hay, wheat and some antiques in the barn.



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