

Washington Report

By Congressman Walter B. Jones

Again last week there was no legislative action on the House Floor. The House continues to go through the necessary organizational period.

What I believe to be of great interest to most of the people of the First District is a series of hearings being held by the House Subcommittee on Tobacco regarding the mandate from Congress to make the tobacco program self-sustained. During the week, hearings were held in Fairmont, N.C. and Raleigh. The week beginning February 15, hearings are scheduled for Clinton, N.C. and on the 16th, in Kinston. The hearings already held attracted overflow crowds. From the results which have been brought to my attention, I believe most farmers now realize that some changes must be made if we are to continue to have the present support program. During the heated battle of the last few weeks of last session, the opponents of the tobacco program made it clear as to what their objections were. They are mainly, 1. the cost to the taxpayers of administering the program; 2. the large number of companies and corporations that hold tobacco allotments and yet do not participate in any way in the production of tobacco; and 3. the large holdings which Flue-Cured Stabilization has; and one or two other minor areas. It is these criticisms that the hearings are designed to address, with the hope that answers can be found that will work the least hardship on the large number of flue-cured producers.

In another area, many of you through the news media have learned that due to budgetary restraints, the Coast Guard is going to have drastically reduce the normal service which many have learned to expect. Many do not realize that the Coast Guard has been charged with additional duties just in recent years. This includes enforcing the 200-mile fishing limit off the United States coast, the policing and handling of the refugees from other countries, and most important, their efforts to fight the drug traffic which is so prevalent off the Atlantic coast. In an effort to restore the services of the Coast Guard almost to their normal level, on Tuesday, January 26 I introduced a supplemental bill which will provide \$135-million in this fiscal year of 1982. Within a few days we had 84 Members as co-sponsors which indicates that many Members are concerned about the treatment which the Coast Guard has received in the last year or two. I have reason to believe that this action has caught the attention of the Administration and it is highly probable that they will negotiate to see that the Coast Guard does not have to curtail their activities.

A few weeks ago the United States Navy announced that they are considering sinking five radioactive submarines off the coast of the Cape Hatteras area. Another possible site is off the coast of California. I have stated that if the Navy persists this plan that as Chairman of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, I intend to hold hearings as to the feasibility, safety and necessity of this action. Until such time as I am convinced beyond any doubt that there would be absolutely no danger, then I shall oppose this proposal.

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