

Senator Sam Ervin Says...

WASHINGTON — The Senate has opened another Pandora's box which is almost certain to accelerate the day when the federal government will have to choose between imposing confiscatory taxes or confess national bankruptcy.

This time the occasion was the passage of S. 750, a bill to provide up to \$50,000 and certain other benefits for victims of violent crime. Only eight senators voted against the bill. I was one of those who opposed its passage.

I have the utmost compassion for any individual who suffers from any criminal act. In recent years I have fought many legislative battles to protect society against criminals. My zeal in behalf of "law and order" has not diminished. I think that swift and speedy justice for the criminal would do much to deter crime and violence. But what we have in this bill is another effort to use an empty federal treasury to relieve the criminal of the consequences of his acts. I might add that the costs are bound to accelerate in the years ahead.

Advocates of the measure pointed to the need for such legislation and said that it will only cost millions of dollars annually at a time when the federal government is already spending billions of dollars for welfare, income security and other programs. The trouble with this argument is that it is constantly used to justify about any kind of new federal program. Only a few days ago the Senate overwhelmingly approved (without my vote) a so-called revenue-sharing measure to give the states, counties and cities \$33.5 billion. Little was said by its advocates about the fact that the federal government is expected to incur an estimated \$35 billion deficit for the current fiscal year. Instead, that bill was promoted on the grounds that the states do not have sufficient resources to perform obligations they have assumed.

As could be expected, the justification for revenue sharing was ignored when it came time to justify the crime compensation bill. Better that it was, for its proponents now seek to encourage the states to embark upon new programs compensating crime victims notwithstanding the fact that Congress is aware of the inability of the states to finance the bill.

The irony of all of this is that Congress will be called upon in a few days to extend and increase the \$430 billion debt ceiling, a semi-annual ritual for this calendar year.

I recognize that in bringing these matters to public attention that I am performing an almost futile task. The American people have been convinced by presidents and members of Congress that there is nothing to worry about. The President recently went so far as to promise that if he is re-elected, he will not raise taxes during the next four years.

The situation reminds one of the story of the king who wore no clothes and all of the citizens of the kingdom who were reluctant to tell him so. Still anyone who cares to look will see that the federal government is not an ecomomary institution. Inflation, uncontrolled spending, our inability to market our goods abroad, and taxes are related to federal spending programs. We cannot ignore these economic facts as if they were some fantasy.

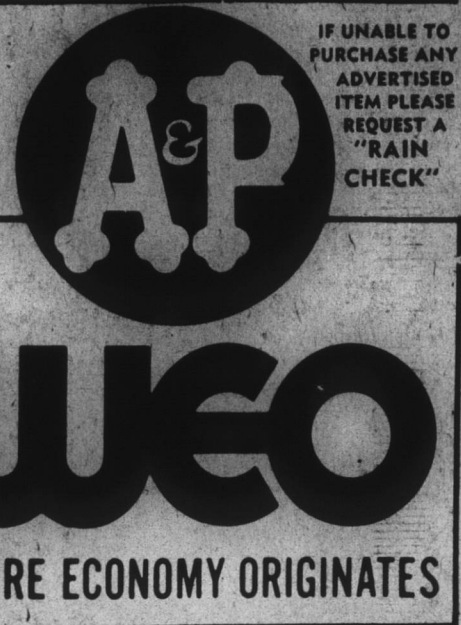
Every journey to an unwise end starts with a single step. The crime compensation bill is the first step toward governmental compensation of a whole new area of individual losses and injuries. If anyone doubts this, he should reflect that there is no more justification for compensating victims of violent crimes than there is for compensating victims of fraudulent crimes. One suffers just as much as one who is robbed of his earnings.

The message in this trend is clear. We cannot provide all things to all citizens free. The ultimate burden falls upon the American taxpayer. Unfortunately, little is ever said about this essential part of a new program when the advocates call attention to its need.

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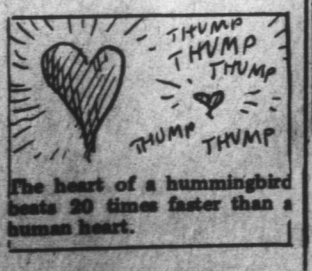
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