

The Raid on the Federal School Lunch Program

The present Administration says that it is quite concerned about the continuing inflationary spiral. However, the Administration hypocritically demonstrates its supposed concern by vetoing bills designed to improve human services to the great masses of middle and low income people in this country. So far, it has managed to defeat minimum wage legislation, meaningful housing legislation and significant health care legislation; it has stymied needed improvements in the areas of education, senior citizen care and in providing effective social services to the poor. This Administration has also been characterized by its demonstrative ability to zealously protect the interests of the military-industrial complex and, thereby, supports, programs assuring the continued profit-making complex.

Since no segment of American life has been untouched by the Administration's definition of what constitutes inflation, it should surprise no one that the Administration regards salvaging the already under-funded Federal School

Lunch Program as being another step in the inflationary spiral.

Prior to the beginning of this school year, the mass media was replete with examples of school districts all over the country that were going to drastically reduce their school lunch programs or drop the programs entirely, because of decreased Federal aid.

Many of the schools expressed the attitude that they had been having great difficulty in meeting regular school costs and they simply were not able to channel funds into breakfast and lunch programs. Some schools attempting to continue the school lunch program, decided that the only alternative for them was to force the paying child to absorb the cost of the increases. Some one million children would have been affected by the termination of the federally-subsidized school lunch programs, with thousands more being threatened unless Congress continued the programs and passed legislation regarding their future. In an earlier action, the Committee on which I serve the House

Committee on Education and Labor, passed a bill increasing the Federal contribution to the lunch program from 8 cents to 10 cents. This represents an increase of about \$150 million over the President's request. It also provides increased subsidies for school breakfasts and for other related costs.

On September 24, 1973 the Senate approved Federal aid to the school lunch program by a \$300 million increase over the Administration's request for \$1.5 million, with a key provision which would provide even more money if food costs keep rising. The Senate bill raises the Federal contribution to the lunch program from 8 cents to 12 cents for each student participant; from 40 cents to 45 cents for needy children who get free lunches; and from 30 cents to 35 cents for those who get reduced-rate lunches.

Both the House and the Senate must work out a compromise on the differences between the two bills. Since both the House and Senate bills exceed what the President has requested, the compromise bill faces a possible veto. It would be a veto against children; however, we hope that the President can rise above petty economics on

this issue and sign into law a measure that should be above back-room politics.

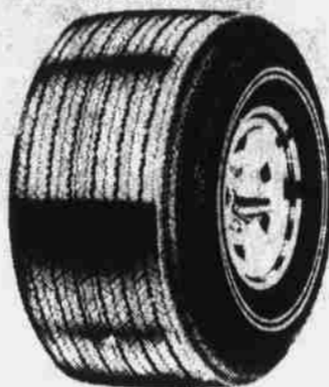
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