

SENATOR

SAM ERVIN

*** SAYS ***



WASHINGTON—For several months now, the nation has been debating the needs of the hungry and how they should be met. Two Senate committees, the Select Committee on Nutrition and the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, have studied the problem. Recently, the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Food Stamp Program, reported out a very liberal authorization bill to meet this need.

The committee bill increased the existing \$340 million authorization for food stamps to \$750 million for fiscal 1970, and \$1.5 billion annually for fiscal 1971 and 1972. That bill also raised the value of food stamps to the "cost of an adequate diet," and made other revisions in the program.

Even so, the committee bill was rejected in favor of the McGovern substitute which changes the character of the program. While I have supported food stamp programs in the past, I could not support the McGovern substitute which won Senate approval, because I felt that it contained a number of unwise provisions.

First, the McGovern substitute seeks to spend far more money for the Food Stamp Program in this fiscal year than the Secretary of Agriculture, the administrator of the program, says can be used wisely. The Secretary of Agriculture testified before the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee that the federal government could wisely expend \$610 million for this program in the current fiscal year which now has nine months to go. Under the Senate-

passed McGovern substitute, that amount was doubled to \$1.250 billion for the same period. Moreover, the McGovern substitute raises the total authorization for the Food Stamp Program to \$5.75 billion for the next three fiscal years. The committee-reported authorization was \$3.75 billion.

As a practical matter, the McGovern substitute appears to me to raise false hopes. The House has been reluctant to approve even the \$750 million emergency authorization for the Food Stamp Program which the Senate passed earlier this session. The Senate action raises serious problems in winning House approval of a Food Stamp Program.

Second, the McGovern substitute bill changes the character of the Food Stamp Program by defining "food" as something it is not. The McGovern substitute says "food" also means such products as the Secretary of Agriculture may determine to be necessary for personal cleanliness, hygiene and home sanitation. This means that food stamps can be used to purchase soap, toothpaste, brooms, mops, toilet articles, and even clothing. This, it seems to me, broadens what began as a "food" program into a welfare program, and duplicates the functions of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Such overlap of departmental programs hinders effective solutions to our problems.

Third, the McGovern substitute would permit any applicant to receive food stamps upon his unsworn statement that he is qualified to receive them. This approach seems to me to forget that a well-run program ought to be properly administered. Anything less harms the needy in favor of the greedy. For these reasons, I regret that the Senate did not accept the more sensible committee-reported bill.

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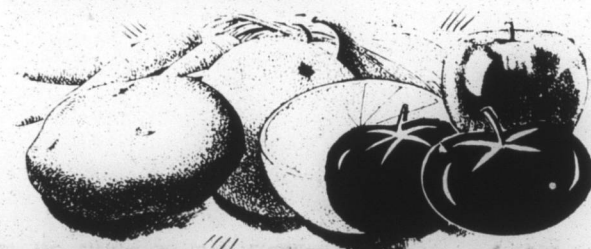
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