

WASHINGTON REPORT

Congressman Edwin D. Eshleman

16th District—Pennsylvania



Government's role in assisting people is coming increasingly under question. Most Americans want to see compassion and help afforded to the sick, the handicapped, the elderly and the really needy members of our society. But, government programs are resented deeply when they assist able-bodied people to avoid work and responsibility. To do so places an unreasonable burden upon the taxpayer.

Nothing more clearly illustrates such an unreasonable burden than the abuse of the food stamp program during the recent strike against the General Motors Corporation. When the

GM employees went on strike, many of them lined up at welfare offices and demanded food stamps. They claimed eligibility under the provisions of the law because they were no longer able to provide "a nutritionally adequate diet" for themselves and their families.

That kind of liberal interpretation is possible as the law now stands. When the Food Stamp Act was passed in 1964, critics pointed out that it was too broadly written. The critics' fears have become practical abuse. The Department of Agriculture has no choice but to issue food stamps, even to individuals who voluntarily quit work to go on strike. While no one questions a man's right to strike, there is much to question about a program which asks hardworking citizens to subsidize him.

The strikers at General Motors committed an economic blow against the American taxpayers, who, through their taxes, were forced to contribute hard-earned dollars to the purchase of food stamps for individuals who freely chose to walk a picket line. Moreover, these same taxpayers

were helping pay for a strike which adversely affected them.

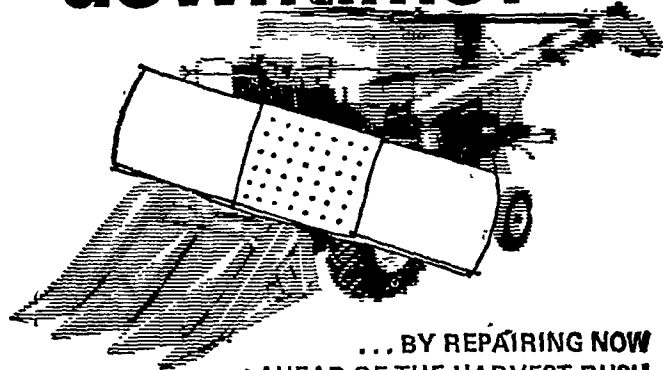
Many innocent individuals were hurt by the GM strike. Since strikers were fed at government expense, there was much less incentive to go back to work. This had to be a contributing factor to the two month duration of the walkout.

As a result, over 100,000 people in related industries — men and women who wanted to work — were laid off through no fault of their own. The gross national product was cut by \$1 billion per week. The eventual settlement, probably sweetened because of the worker's ability to hold out, contributed to the inflationary spiral.

In this case, a program which was conceived as a method of helping people who are really in need has been twisted into a program that works against the interests of most Americans. Should the taxpayer continue to be asked to maintain such a program? I think not. I shall support the effort in Congress to reform the Food Stamp Act by tightening its provisions. The leaders of this effort are seeking to change the law to make it conform with its original intent. Specifically, the attempt is to make certain that those who voluntarily engage in labor disputes are ineligible for food stamp benefits. The general public should not be required to carry such a burden.

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| 6-8 | 305 da. | 20,112M | 785F |
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| 5-8 | 305 da. | 16,219M | 642F |
| Rocket — Oakcrest Roburke Dean dau. | | | |
| 5-4 | 305 da. | 15,038M | 566F |
| 6-9 | 305 da. | 17,208M | 636F |
| Rae — Apollo dau. | | | |
| 2-1 | 298 da. | 13,844M | 539F |
| 3-1 | 283 da. | 15,033M | 582F |
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| 2-0 | 305 da. | 15,095M | 570F |

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