



# ED ESHLEMAN'S WASHINGTON REPORT

By now most of you have heard of the Battle of the Budget. It's the major event in Washington these days. The two opposing

armies in this battle are supposedly Congress and the President.

But if you look at the budget fight only in terms of a showdown between the legislative and executive branches of government, you're almost certain to

become somewhat confused. What about those of us in the Congress who support the President's objectives and will vote to uphold his vetoes of big spending bills? In terms of the battle we're listed in the legislative column, but on the main issue we're with the President.

It can become even more confusing when you realize that what Congress authorizes to be spent and what it actually spends are two entirely different matters. Any program must have both an authorization and an appropriation, and the general pattern is for the authorization to be considerably higher than the final appropriation. Very often the authorization levels are ridiculously high; a practice I deplore because it tends to raise false hopes when all knowledgeable observers know that the actual appropriation will be much lower.

But given the nature of the legislative money process, it is

somewhat unrealistic of the Administration to base the budget battle on the content of authorization bills. Only appropriation bills can really break the budget and lead to higher taxes and bigger deficits.

This might help explain why some of us who support the President's goal of getting the budget under control will not necessarily go along with his position on every bill. For instance, I support programs to increase the burial allotment for veterans, to provide an expanded drug rehabilitation program for veterans and to continue rural water and sewer grants. By the Administration's calculations those bills would authorize \$320 million more than the budget allows.

On the other hand, I favor cutting back in some areas where the President's budget calls for more or continued spending. Agricultural subsidies could be abandoned to the tune of \$3.5 billion. The Defense Department could be trimmed back by \$4 billion on items like getting rid of obsolete military bases. The Administration has talked about a \$3 billion aid program for Vietnam, and cutting that by even one-half would produce another \$1.5 billion savings.

Add up \$5.5 billion in Administration cuts I support and the \$9 billion that I would support beyond their program and you come up with a budget that not only avoids more taxes, but comes very close to being balanced.

The Congress should show some willingness to set some priorities on its own through the authorization process. That does not mean that spending should be permitted to get out of line. When it comes to the job of appropriating money to run the government, the Congress must stay within overall limits set in the President's budget requests, or he has every reason to use his veto. And, if Congress proves unwilling to hold spending in line,



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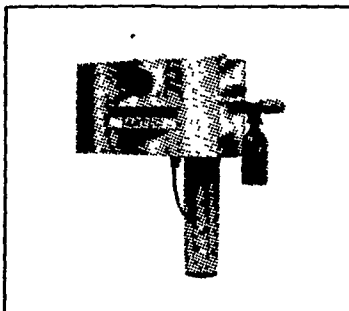
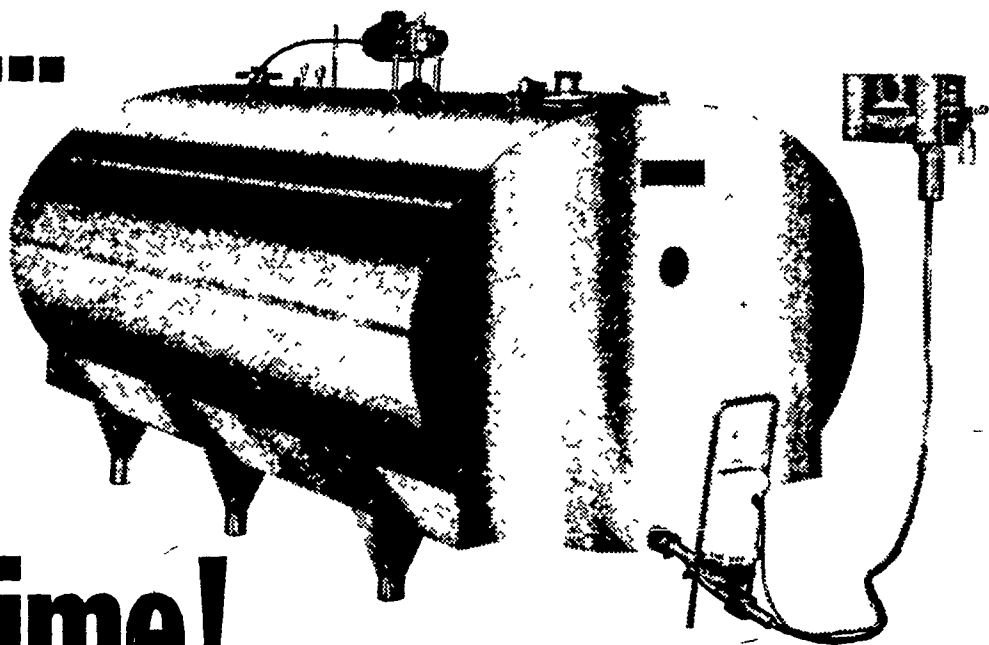
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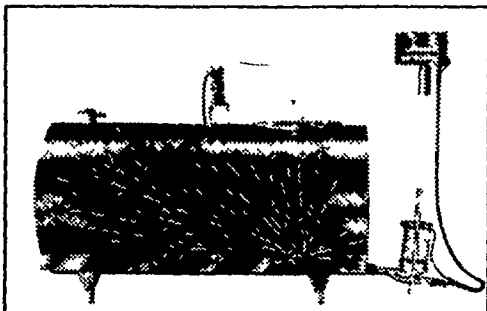
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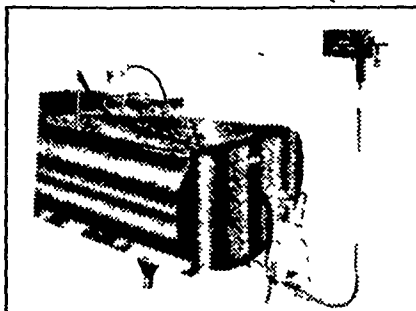
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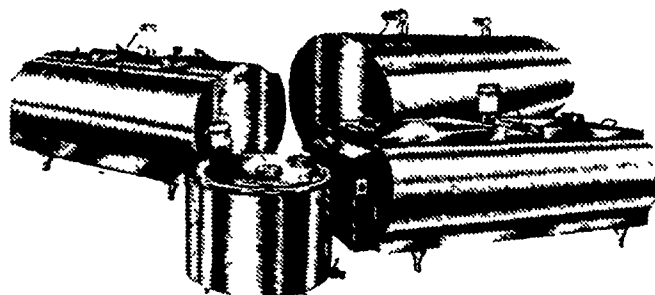


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