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ED ESHLEMAN'S WASHINGTON REPORT

In a recent speech on the House floor, I discussed a topic that seems to concern many of you in the 16th District. Since there is that interest, this column will be devoted to the speech. It is as follows:

Mr. Speaker, as a co-sponsor of H.R. 6708, a bill to prohibit food stamps to strikers, I would like to outline the reasons why I believe it is legislation which must be passed.

By authorizing food stamps for men on strike, we are supporting a growing national trend toward union walkouts. Welfare money is tax money, and this trend means that the taxes paid by all citizens are being used to benefit a few citizens.

Who benefits from strikes? The Government certainly does not, and, in fact, it spends much money, time and effort in helping to mediate walkouts. So there is no reason for the Government to give welfare support to strikers out of self-interest.

The public does not benefit from strikes. Every walkout causes the public some kind of inconvenience, and when the settlements result in big, new contracts, the public ends up paying for them in higher prices. So there is no reason to give welfare to strikers in the public interest.

The people who benefit from strikes are the workers and their families who win a new contract to their liking because of the walkout. But it is these same people who we use to justify the practice of giving welfare to strikers. We say that these families must not be made to suffer just because there is a union-management dispute. But these families are in that position because the workers, through their unions, have chosen to go on strike. That means the practice adds up to welfare for people who have made a decision not to work. And that is unfair to other American families who work to pay welfare benefits to strikers

who have elected not to stay on the job.

The result of this trend toward unions reaching into the public welfare pocket is that strikes are getting longer, contract settlements are getting bigger and the taxpayer is picking up the tab.

The striker on welfare is able to hold out longer and thereby win bigger and better contracts. The longer the strike, the more public inconvenience; and the bigger the contract, the more public expense; but the taxpayer pays for it anyway.

The unions have everything to gain and nothing to lose when welfare becomes their personal plaything. They no longer have to develop a strike fund. Instead their decision to strike can be based on the knowledge that government will pay the cost of supporting workers' families. And that welfare support is no hardship because there is evidence that it can be as much as 80 percent of average take home pay.

What kind of climate for labor negotiations develop when the management side is the only one suffering? The workers don't have to get back to their jobs because there is the welfare check.

What kind of climate for labor negotiations develop when the management side is the only one suffering? The workers don't

have to get back to their jobs because there is the welfare check. The unions don't have to worry about a dwindling strike fund. Only one side has a real interest in a short-term walkout, and their way of keeping it short must be to give labor what it wants.

It is time for the Federal Government to get itself out of the business of welfare support to strikers. It is time to get back to

our original commitment in the field of labor-management relations -- to promote the public interest by helping achieve the fairest possible settlement in the shortest possible time. As a starter we should say bluntly that strikers shall not receive food stamps. That is what H.R. 6708 gives us an opportunity to say.

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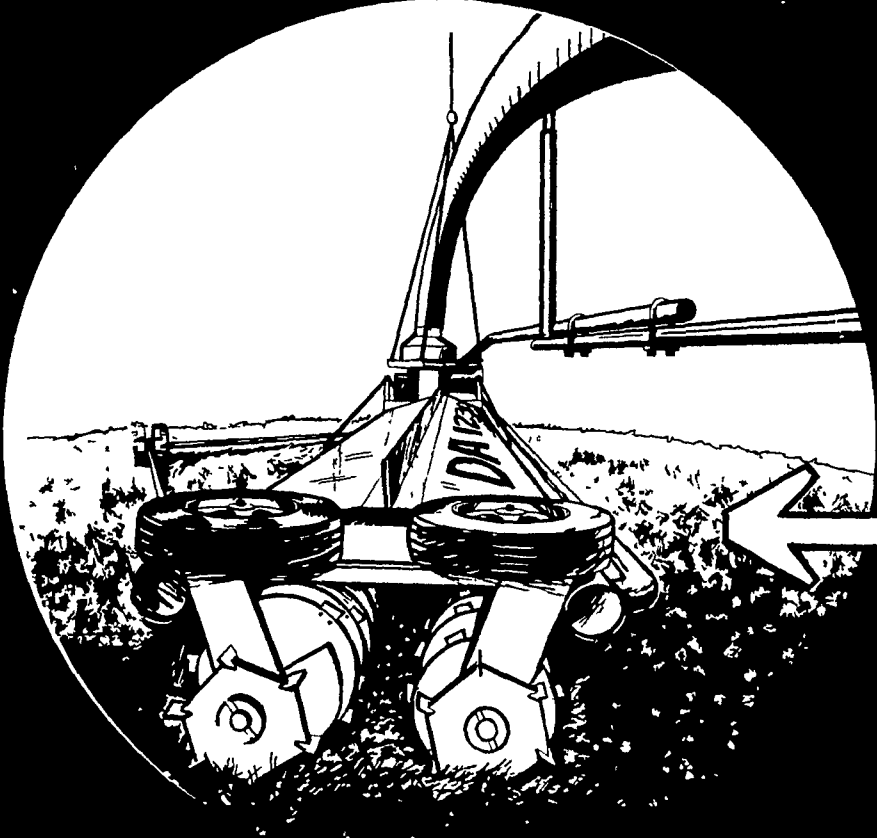
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