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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 8, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JIM LYNN

FROM:

JERRY H. JONES 

The attached article was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation to you:

-- Is this the policy?

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld

4/8/75

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~Jim Fynn~~

Is This the

policy?

State Told to Speed Food Stamp Program

By Bud Vestal

LANSING — Gov. William G. Milliken got a message from Washington: don't make people stand in line many hours or wait a month to get food stamps if they are eligible.

It was brought by an old friend, Edward J. Hekman, formerly a Grand Rapids industrialist and now national administrator of the federal Food and Nutrition Service which has become a multi-billion dollar business. The food stamp program alone now costs an estimated \$4 billion a year.

Other programs administered by Hekman include the school lunch program and the child nutrition program for infants and expectant mothers, and the school milk program.

Hekman said after a meeting with Milliken and staff members, lasting more than an hour, that he urged the Governor, as he is urging governors of all states, to build an adequate staff to administer the "fast-expanding federal food programs."

One objective, he said in answer to questions, is to process applications rapidly and "not make people stand in line for hours or wait 30 days to get on a program."

He said new federal regulations for the food programs will require "a certain level of competence in administrative staff" and funds can be withheld if the administration doesn't meet federal requirements.

But he had good news for Michigan: the "error rate" of overpayment in the food stamp program in Michigan is relatively low — only four and a half per cent "over-benefit" compared to a national average of eight per cent.

And he had bad news: while approximately 4,500 Michigan schools have entered the lunch program — which provides lunches at low prices and in many cases entirely free — but more than 1,000 schools are not in the program.

He also said that 640,000 persons in Michigan take part in the food stamp program, making it one of the largest federally-financed programs of aid in this state. It is estimated that, nationally, 18 million Americans will be in the program by June, Hekman said.

He emphasized that his message to Milliken was partnership — "that this is a federal-state program in the management of it, and the federal government pays half the cost of administration."

Hekman is on a tour in which he will visit

Lansing



Edward Hekman carried the message to Lansing.

five other states and talk with governors in California, Florida, Arkansas, Idaho, Nebraska. He said he had asked his regional directors to pick a state in each region where a visit would be beneficial.

"Michigan has a high level of unemployment, and it's my home state," Hekman noted.

The meeting was unannounced and afterward Milliken and his staff had no immediate comment on it. The Governor has already ordered the Social Services department to put more employees into the food stamp and unemployment compensation programs to speed up application processes. News media had carried pictures and stories of long lines of applicants waiting in the cold for state offices to open, then standing for hours before even beginning the red tape process.

Hekman said under the new rules soon forthcoming the food stamp application process will be "simplified."

Because of high unemployment and price inflation, families with incomes of as much as \$12,000 and even higher qualify for food stamps. School teachers, policemen and even a Texas legislator have qualified for the stamps. A recent magazine article dealing with the program was titled, "Food Stamps Go Middle Class."