

Red Tape Snarling Subsidies

By CORINNE ABATT

If one is ready to believe those on both the giving and receiving ends of the food stamp program, some Oakland County-wide changes are in order.

Essentially the program, approved by Congress in 1964, is a subsidy to stretch food dollars for low-income families.

Persons or families who qualify may buy coupons which, when redeemed for domestic food items, total a percentage more than the original cost.

For some this percentage may be more than 25 for others, it is less than 25.

A CROSS-SECTION of food stamp recipients and Office of Economic Opportunity staff attended a food stamp conference at the UAW Hall in Madison Heights last week. On the panel were William Rutledge, planning director for the Oakland County Com-

mission on Economic Opportunity; Anthony Taverni, regional representative of food stamps for the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; and Marvin Robinson, food stamp officer for the Oakland County Dept. of Social Services.

Mrs. Sheila Hutton, of Royal Oak, a food stamp recipient, offered a list of ways food stamp problems could be corrected. Both Taverni and Robinson concurred on at least half her list.

In Oakland County for October of last year, more than 22,000 persons used food stamps. Those who qualify range from ADC mothers, public assistance recipients, senior citizens on limited income and low income persons not on public assistance.

There is no across-the-board rule for deciding who may buy food stamps, in what amount, or at what price. Deciding factors are many and complicated. It does not depend simply on gross income. There

are deductions allowed such as retirement and social security payments, house payments, union dues, taxes, school tuition. Personal possessions up to \$1,500 do not count against the person. Over age 60, \$3,000 worth of personal property is exempt.

RED TAPE is not over once the qualification, has been established; in fact, it has only begun.

Next comes a verification card to show to the retailer and finally the food stamp book. While Genesee County has some 30 places where food stamps may be obtained, Oakland has only two—the main office of the Dept. of Social Services in Pontiac or the sub-station in Royal Oak.

Mrs. Hutton mentioned that some people in far-flung corners of the county have to drive a 120 mile round trip to get stamps.

An ADC mother from Keego Harbor told the group that she was allowed to buy \$56 worth

of food stamps for \$44, but the round trip to Pontiac often cost her the \$12 savings, since she had to rent or borrow a car. She said she gets a total of \$299 per month to raise her family and her lowest possible monthly budget is \$317.

Like Mrs. Hutton and other food stamp recipients, she objected to the domestic-only food rule. She said she needed soap, toilet tissue and vitamins to keep her children healthy.

Taverni said the four imported items that are allowed are coffee, tea, cocoa and bananas, none of which is grown in this country. The no-import rule is for the protection of American farmers.

One of Mrs. Hutton's strongest objections was that Michigan charges sales tax on the total value of the stamps. Thus, the state receives income from a federal subsidy. She questioned the legality of

this in the light of United States food stamp regulations. Illinois does not tax groceries purchased with food stamps. In Michigan an ADC mother may pay \$15 for \$25 worth of stamps. She will pay sales tax on the full amount.

MANY PROBLEMS are mechanical rather than philosophical.

Recipients must walk a flight of stairs at the issuance centers, difficult for older citizens. The county data processing system is inadequate for the increased case load.

Robertson said there is a 10-day lag in change of address, a wait which can create a hardship for hungry families in spite of the fact that there is an emergency procedure.

Mrs. Hutton's suggestions included:

- A standard price for food stamps instead of a graded one based on income.

- More distribution centers.
- A simpler way of establishing qualifications and re-qualifications for stamps.
- Permit retailers to give change rather than due bills.
- Relaxing of the restrictions on items allowed.

- A better system for mailing stamps to those unable to get to the issuance centers.
- More social service staff so there can be better and closer communication between the Dept. of Social Services and the clients.

PAUL MASSARON, UAW spokesman, criticized the Nixon administration and spoke of the approaching "crisis in human services."

Among the threats he listed is the move now under consideration to deny welfare benefits to a family whose bread winner is on strike and the closing of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

These present were urged by both Massaron and Mrs. Hutton to write to their congressmen urging that the welfare programs be maintained in their present state or expanded.

Toastmistresses Call For Members

BIRMINGHAM Toastmistress Clubs International begins a new club in Oakland County this month. Club membership prepares women to meet new challenges with confidence, and is for the homemaker, business or professional woman, concerned citizen or volunteer worker.

"Whatever her role in today's world, she can learn by doing Toastmistress's tested program of self-

development. The world grows better because people wish that it should and because they take the right steps to make it better," says Ernestine White, founder.

The organization trains women to increase communication abilities, improve leadership skills, learn efficient organizational techniques and open new vistas of self-improvement.

IN A TYPICAL Toastmistress Club meeting, every

assignment any member has is evaluated, including the officers' performances in the business meeting, the committee member reports, opening exercises and program participants.

A timer and a grammarian are on hand, because evaluation is the key to improvement in Toastmistress's philosophy.

Workshops on evaluation test analysis of voice, speech effectiveness and posture. Skits and education

lessons are used to explain parliamentary procedure.

Clubs are limited to 30 members, and each club holds two meetings a month, either afternoons or evenings, according to members' wishes. They can be dinner, luncheon or tea meetings and this will be decided by the women in the area who call stating they are interested in attending the first organizational meeting. Members will determine their own permanent meeting place.

Clubs will be taken in this area by Mrs. Robert H. McCall, 20485 W. 11 Mile Rd., Southfield.

The Michigan and Toledo, O. clubs, called Council No. 4 of the Great Lakes Region, hold council meetings four times throughout the year. Because each of the 10 clubs rotates its turn, the members have the opportunity to learn both hosting and detailed committee work.

The annual council speech contest, to be held in April at Detroit's Mercy College, will be hosted by the Redford Club. There, each club contest winner will compete, and the winner of that contest meets the winners of the eight councils at the regional contest meeting in June, in Louisville, Ky.

The club's motto is "To love our language and use it with grace and facility."

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Bachelor of business administration degrees were won by Richard Butters, 29918 W. 11 Mile; Sandra Donlon, 29743 Beacontree; Joan Hartsock, 29440 Manning; Edward Petreca, 35511 Jefferson Court; and Richard Smith, 35135 Drake-shire.

Bachelor of science degrees were awarded Gerald Horner, 24078 LeQuier; Arthur Lennox, 25325 Ridgewood; Diane O'Neil, 29625 Ravenscroft; Diane Schiffman, 20975 Robinson; and Patricia Watkins, 36925 Blanchard.

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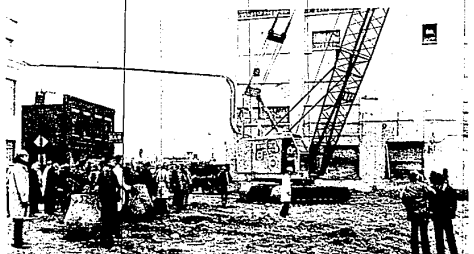
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DEMOLITION OF THE Robin Hood flour mill on the Detroit waterfront has begun under supervision of the Farmington demolition contracting firm, Zebrowski and Associates. The razing will help make way for a planned 32-acre urban waterfront development. The Farmington concern holds contracts for tearing down 14 buildings on the site.

Scouts Camping In Winter

Boy Scout Troop 242, sponsored by St. Paul's Lutheran Church, recently participated in the weekend Polar Bear camp out. The annual event, sponsored by the Ottawa Valley Council, drew almost 500 scouts.

The campout featured flagjack shelter building, a tug-of-war,

and fire-building competition. Troop 242 earned an award of merit for its performance during the campout.

Among those attending were Scoutmaster Steve Heisler, Asst. Scoutmaster Harry Williams, Committee Chairman Rudy Cooper and Advancement Chairman Duane Voorman. Livonia scouts attending

were John Borth, Keith Cooper, Stuart Heisler, Willard Mazure, Mike Mogell, Dave Svatik, Chris Thalacker, Dan West and Robert Whitty.

Farmington scouts attending the campout were Tony Brown, Billy Dicks, Terry Lambert, Dale Williams, Greg Voorman and Duane Voorman Jr. Dick Borth provided transportation.

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