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Administration Ready to Embrace Stamp Plan

By JOSEPH D. HUTNYAN
United Press International
Washington—After experimenting in test areas for 16 months, the Kennedy administration appears ready to embrace the food stamp plan as a permanent project to improve the health of the nation's poor.

Howard P. Davis, director of food distribution for the Agriculture Department, estimated about 4 million people would be eligible if the program were nationwide.

President Kennedy set up the plan shortly after taking office two years ago. Its purpose is to cut farm surpluses and help raise the nutritional level of men, women and children who are destitute and hungry or whose income is so meager that their diets are sub-standard.

Provides Coupons
It provides families with coupons—the food stamps—which may be exchanged for groceries at a neighborhood store.

The pilot food stamp operation began in May, 1961. It was tried in selected counties of Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

About 150,000 persons received the stamps during this trial-blazing stage.

Extending Test Counties
The Agriculture Department now is extending it to test counties in Alabama, California, Kansas, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Washington, Wisconsin, Arkansas, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Missouri, Indiana and Tennessee.

Those close to the study say the pilot operation already has proved the idea will work. Additional research is needed only for refinement of administrative machinery. Then the prospects are it will stop being an experiment and become an institution.

The Agriculture Department already has said the plan raised the diet levels of those who got the stamps and perked up the economies of depressed areas. There was, for example, the praise received last year from a group of school principals in West Virginia. They reported that pupils were dressed better, appeared better fed and missed fewer school days since their families started receiving stamps.

Stamp Idea Tried
In the late 1930s the food stamp idea was tried on a nationwide basis. But it was suspended when World War II wiped out most unemployment and quickly dried up the farm surplus.

Enforcement was one of the problems of the old program. The present pilot operation was drafted to avoid the administrative headaches that slowed down the previous one. The Agriculture Department's Davis said "we have seen no indication of any widespread violations."

Critics were fearful chiselers would have a field day buying other items than food—such as liquor. There also was concern about possible stamp counterfeiting and black market stamp peddlers.

There is, however, no evidence that these have become serious problems. This is mainly because the present plan is less complicated and easier to police.

It works, typically, this way:
A coal miner reports to a



SENT TO STATES—The French Ministry of Cultural Affairs has announced in Paris that France is sending Leonardo da Vinci's famed "Mona Lisa" from Louvre Museum in Paris to the United States for several weeks' exhibition. (UPI)



FOOD STAMP—This is a copy of the government's one dollar food stamp coupon. government redeems the coupons at value. (UPI)

check out the miner's story. After confirming it, they use a pre-arranged formula to determine how much a man in his circumstances should be spending to feed his family, taking into consideration such factors as the age of children and the average cost of food in the community.

Decides Amount
The local welfare agency may decide the miner should be spending \$60 a month for food. He then would be issued an identification card and a book of stamps for this amount each month.

The stamps may be cashed at food stores for almost any item. The few exceptions include coffee, tea, cocoa and bananas.

Agriculture Department reports show 80 per cent of the increase in food consumption among those receiving stamps has been in meats, poultry, dairy products and fish.

Officials say this has had an indirect impact on reducing such farm surplus items such as feed grains.

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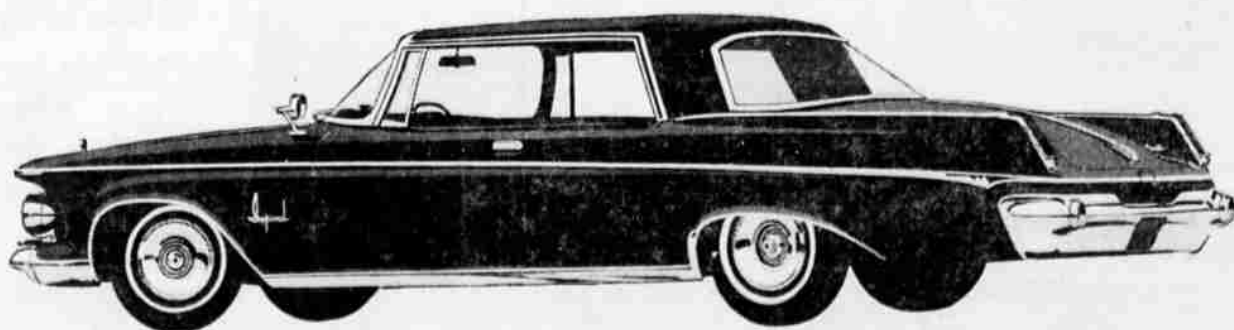
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