

# Farmers Subsidizing City Programs

**W**HENEVER agricultural legislation comes up in Congress, there is always much comment about "the farm program" and "farm subsidies."

But when legislation regarding urban problems comes up, we seldom hear proposals described as "the city program" and "city subsidies." Nevertheless, they are considerably more numerous and more costly than farm programs or subsidies.

Appropriations for fiscal year 1978 for agriculture and related agencies total \$12.7 billion, including urban outlays for consumer programs, food stamps and school lunches.

Compare this figure with \$69 billion for Housing and Urban Development, \$60 billion for Labor, Health, Education and Welfare, and \$10 billion for Public Works-ERDA. All of these are related for the most part to problems of the cities.

Another \$6 billion will go for transportation and related agencies, mostly urban subsidies, and ur-

ban businesses receive aid in a variety of forms, just as rural businesses do.

It would take a competent accountant some time to sort out all subsidies enjoyed by urban citizens. Urban aid would include loans to rescue New York City from overspending and farm aid would include crop loans to finance overproduction. Is producing too much food worse than spending too much tax money?

Delegations of farmers are in Washington this week to remind Congress that they are in dire trouble and might not be able to keep on producing much longer. The strike action is expected to receive a lot of public notice.

Not so much attention will be given to a major huddle of city officials in Washington next week to develop strategy for getting more urban aid, for bigger "city programs" and subsidies.

A high-level interagency task force called the Urban and Regional Policy Group (URPG) has been

working for months trying to come up with a "city program" that will suit both the Carter administration and Congress, and also pacify urban officials.

Urban pressure groups, including minority factions, have strong lobbies in Washington. Because they may represent blocs of voters larger than total number of farmers, they get attention.

The Office of Management and Budget is said to favor direct spending in subsidy programs to reduce cities' financial burdens because they move the money rapidly and less visibly. They do not appear to increase federal payrolls very much.

There are other inconsistencies and paradoxes in demands for farm aid and city aid. Certain groups are appealing for mammoth subsidized "made work" jobs for city people, especially black youths. Yet farmers sometimes can't find help to harvest crops.