

# Battle Over Budget Figures

**A**N allegation made recently by Budget Director David A. Stockman is certain to draw fire from agricultural spokesmen. He said the government is "spending more for farm subsidies than we are for welfare for the entire poverty population of this country."

Stockman calculated that all federal outlays to bolster the rural economy would total approximately \$38 billion this year. The approved budget for the Department of Agriculture was \$31.8 billion, plus \$2.2 billion in transfer funds.

The \$31.8 billion included \$10.8 billion for food stamps, but this was raised by \$1.1 billion in the same bill that senators used to add almost \$1 million a year to their own salaries.

In addition, USDA funds included more than \$3 billion for other non-farm programs, such as child nutrition, special milk programs, women, infants' and children's programs, commodity supplemental programs, nutrition assistance for Puerto Rico, food donations, nutrition information and food administration—all of which are consumer-type programs.

It is true that the payment-in-kind program substantially exceeded original cost estimates, due to large participation by farmers in the effort to reduce surpluses by idling land. This is now estimated at some \$21 billion, which no doubt was included in Stockman's figures, but part of it was in the original USDA budget.

However, the food programs do not represent all that the government is doing for the poor in the United States, which includes a steadily increasing number as the "poverty line" is adjusted upward periodically in terms of dollar income.

An estimate published last year, based on data from Stockman's Office of Management and Budget, showed federal outlays for food stamps, Medicaid, public assistance, housing subsidies and supplemental security income totaled \$53.1 billion. This exceeds Stockman's estimate of \$38 billion for farmers by a wide margin.

The battle of the budget seems to be focusing on who gets the biggest share of deficit spending.