

Last year we had a minority motion, a Republican motion to kill the rent supplement program. It was defeated on the floor by 184 to 198, a rather close vote.

I was disheartened to realize that the Agriculture Committee Democrats supported the motion to kill the rent supplement program; a majority of them supported that motion, and the entire Agriculture Committee voted overwhelmingly to support the motion by a vote of 23 to 7.

Then on the vote on the model cities program, the total membership of your committee voted 24 to 10 to kill the model cities program in its entirety and the Democrats only voted by a majority of one, by a vote of 10 to 9, to support the program.

So I think that leaves all of us with a feeling of some dismay and some feeling that we have been let down in the broad gage point of view which we try to take on all national legislation, including legislation coming out of your committee, let down by our distinguished and beloved colleagues on the Agriculture Committee.

Be that as it may, I would like to ask you a question or two about the substance of your thoughts.

Do you understand, first of all, that this legislation would not set up any Federal body that would regulate wages or even establish minimum wages, that it would only create the mechanism by which labor could, in effect, have a voice?

Mr. POAGE. That is correct.

Mr. SCHEUER. It is also my information that the overwhelming items that have been the subject of dispute and contention have not been really wage items, but have been conditions of work, the availability of cold water, the availability of outdoor privies, not indoor privies but outdoor privies—the availability of minimally, even sub-minimally adequate sanitation facilities. Is that your understanding?

Mr. POAGE. Frankly, I wouldn't want to say that is my understanding. However, you may be correct in the facts.

Mr. SCHEUER. Certainly, I think it is fair to say that the testimony—

Mr. POAGE. To my understanding it is not, but it is not my contention that I am better informed than you, but it is not my understanding.

Mr. SCHEUER. The overwhelming bulk of the testimony before this committee emphasized the conditions of work, the dignity of the workingman rather than the wages and hours. And I must say that finds its counterpart in our cities, too.

I was astonished and almost a little amused in connection with our sanitation strike that one of the real grievances of the workers was that sanitation workers did not have prestige, to use that word; and that people considered them garbage collectors.

Let me ask you one other question. You have raised the question of ability to pay. Now, in a sense that's irrelevant because in no other aspect of collective-bargaining law or even establishment of regulatory legislation on the minimum wages and hours and the like, which this is not, have we ever considered ability to pay.

But if there were a compelling equitable case here, it would certainly be one of the things I would like to know about and in some way it would have its impact in the legislative machinery.