

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, GSA believes that its work through the Public Buildings Service is not as susceptible to seasonality as other construction efforts may be. Nonetheless, we suspect there are elements of seasonality of which we may not be aware. We would welcome an opportunity to support the Secretary of Labor in a thorough study of the problem. However, we would defer to him as to the necessity for passage of H.R. 15990 as a means of initiating such a study.

This completes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Mr. O'HARA. Thank you very much, Mr. Foster. I noticed with respect to your labor market surveys that you say at the top of page 6 that you have "been, for some time, seeking the best means of accommodating our projects to the labor and materials market. If we had found marked differences in the availability of building construction workers in winter as opposed to summer, we would have taken advantage of it through the means of our market survey technique."

Then you speak of the market survey. Am I to gather from what you said at the top of page 6 that your market surveys have not found marked differences in the availability of construction workers?

Mr. FOSTER. That is exactly what it means, sir. We have only made in the last year and a half somewhere between 75 and 100 of these market surveys. We do not now require our regional officials who do this work to submit their reports into Washington unless there is a recommendation not to proceed with the project.

If they find a favorable climate they proceed. This record is also influenced by the fact that for the last two years we have been on a slowly reducing level of effort through slowdowns and stretchouts. We have had fewer projects going on the market.

So I would not want to represent to you that this is a hard and fast and statistically sound sample that I report to you. It just happens that the amount of work that we have awarded, the amount of obligations we have made, the amount of expenditure or work in place, has not shown any seasonal pattern, nor have we had one case where I can remember where a region recommended that we not proceed with the job because the construction labor market was too tight and the skills and trades were not there.

More likely delay in marketing a project by the Public Buildings Service has been due to the fact that there is too much other construction pending and we are afraid our bids will be too high. Now, this has been the exception. The rule has been that we survey the market and proceed.

In preparing for this testimony this morning I went back and looked at work placement by months for a several year period and I couldn't detect any seasonal pattern. I suppose that there was a slightly less production effort in winter if averaged out but not enough to rely on.

Mr. O'HARA. Of course the time of the award, as you point out, doesn't necessarily say when the construction takes place.

Mr. FOSTER. This is true.

Mr. O'HARA. Because related to that you have your completion dates