

men and women deserve well of their country; for, upon their work, their abilities, and their efforts, depends the building of the physical plant upon which rests our strength as a nation.

Although no one would question that they deserve well of this country, I submit to this committee that they have not received the consideration that they deserve in a most basic matter. Their need for stable, continuous work has not been given the attention that it deserves.

H.R. 15990 is the first step in bringing to these 4 million building trades men the benefits which we consider basic to the American way of life.

The American construction work force is a pool of skilled workers that is the envy of the world. They have, through the exercise of their skills, contributed to a construction industry that is second to none in efficiency, economy, speed of operation, and quality of product.

In spite of this great contribution, our people face an annual ordeal of unemployment at a rate more than twice that of any other group of American workers. This burden, which nullifies their years of training and devoted services and depresses their income each year, drives some of our best and most promising young people out of the construction industry in a search for more stable employment. This is a price we can no longer afford to pay and we, in the building trades department, urge the Congress to bend its best efforts to finding a solution to this pernicious and inequitable situation.

Whatever historical justification there may have been for the seasonal pattern of employment in the construction industry, it is no longer necessary. Construction technology has advanced to a point that allows significant steps to be taken toward year-round operation.

Work can be enclosed, either partially or on a whole site. Additives which have been developed in recent years can be put into mortar and concrete that will allow them to set at temperatures and under conditions which formerly would not have been possible.

Portable heaters are available which will, in cold weather, protect the comfort of the worker and the strength of materials and eliminate much of the necessity for closing down jobs in the winter.

We could go on and on with a list of technological advances that make possible year-round work in the construction industry; but suffice it to say at this time that no technological problems exist which would prevent the development of stable all-year construction employment in this country.

What factor then promotes the continuation of seasonal ups and downs of construction employment? Why, in parts of our country where climatic conditions do not demand seasonal shutdowns of construction work, do we see the same pattern of seasonal peaks and valleys in construction employment?

We suggest that there are a number of factors which combine to project what may have been historical necessities into our modern era.

First, of course, there is a very human inertia which prevents old habits from being easily broken. Building codes based on obsolete considerations of material strength and the effects of weather strengthen that inertia.

Fiscal practices of governments at all levels, with their annual appropriations and July through June fiscal years, tend to perpetuate