

Job Security in the Building Industry— And High Quality Low-Rent Housing

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This article is concerned with the labor and the urban renewal aspects of the problems of job security in the building industry and high quality low-rent housing. The author is an assistant United States attorney in the Southern District of New York.

THE SUPREME COURT DECISION¹ that collective bargaining agreements in the building trades may permit employees to refuse to work on prefabricated materials focuses attention on the problem of job security in the building industry—and how it can be protected at the same time that high quality housing at low rents is provided for those not now able to obtain it.

Groups Involved in This Problem

Building trades employees are vitally concerned about the security of their jobs which may be threatened by building methods which use less labor. This concern comes on top of job insecurity due to the ups and downs of construction, the seasonal nature of some types of construction work, and the fact that there is usually no permanent employer, but merely jobs on particular pieces of construction work.

Citizens living in overcrowded or dilapidated housing who cannot afford to pay luxury apartment rents are vitally affected by the high level of building costs. This is particularly true of those whose access to the housing market is limited by racial discrimination.

All citizens in metropolitan areas are affected by blight caused in part by substandard housing, which if not eliminated, tends to spread.

Taxpayers are necessarily affected by the amount of housing which can be obtained in return for public investment in housing programs.

The nation as a whole is affected both by the degree to which high and steady employment at good rates of pay can be assured in major industries of which construction is one of the most important, and by the degree to which the problems of our central cities can be effectively dealt with for the benefit of all and as an example pertinent

* The views expressed are solely those of the author and are not attributable to any governmental agency.

¹ *NLRB v. National Woodwork Mfrs. Assn.*, — U. S. —, 55 LC ¶ 11,842 (1967).