

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION  
Washington

ADMINISTRATOR ANDREWS OPPOSES AMENDMENTS

Elmer F. Andrews, Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, U. S.

Department of Labor, today condemned the proposed amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act as "A Bill to Lower Wages and Establish Longer Hours of Work." He denounced the opponents of wage and hour legislation for their attempts to secure emasculating amendments to the Act at a time when it has been in effect for only seven months.

Mr. Andrews said "this bill threatens the working standards not only of 11,000,000 workers coming within the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, but of every worker in America, because it proposes to recognize in federal law low wages and long hours." He said further that "this legislation is being supported by well-financed lobby groups who are hell-bent on taking from clerical and industrial workers the social gains which have been made during the last year."

The full statement of the Administrator follows:

"Last February, I stated to the House Labor Committee that I would be glad to support certain clarifying amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act. The changes proposed in these amendments were all of a noncontroversial character and were generally agreed to and believed to be a desirable improvement of the Act. These changes were embodied in H.R. 5435 introduced by Mrs. Norton, Chairman of the House Labor Committee. Powerful lobby groups, who have always been unfriendly to labor have transformed the original Bill into an attempted emasculation of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

"It is obvious now that no Bill can be passed at this session of the Congress without opening up the Act generally for revision. The most controversial issues have been injected--issues upon which there are sharp differences

of opinion, some of which involve proposals to exempt hundreds of thousands of employees. Such questions cannot be intelligently decided except by time and experience in the administration of the law. The Fair Labor Standards Act has been in effect but seven months and there has been no real opportunity to determine conclusively what its effects will be. This is no time for a general revision of the statute.

"H.R. 5435, with the proposed amendments of the House Labor Committee, would repeal the benefits of the Act for hundreds of thousands of workers.

"In the lumber industry, 150,000 employees would be removed from the present 44-hour workweek and worked up to 60 hours a week for 38 workweeks with no hour limitation at all during the remaining 14 workweeks.

"125,000 employees engaged in packing fresh fruits and vegetables would be given a complete exemption from both minimum wages and maximum hours.

"73,000 employees engaged in handling and processing tobacco (consisting principally of Negro workers) would be completely removed from the minimum wage and maximum hour provisions.

"Tens of thousands of employees engaged in canning plants, slaughter houses, terminal grain elevators, etc., would be removed from practically all protection from overtime hours.

"The jobs of tens of thousands of factory workers are endangered because of the provision in the Bill demanding that I allow lower wage rates for home-workers. This provision runs counter to half a century of experience and the trend in all civilized countries.

"In my judgment, this legislation should be entitled 'A Bill to Lower Wages and Establish Longer Hours of Work.' A vote for this Bill is a vote to nullify the Act. This Bill threatens the working standards not only of the 11,000,000 workers coming within the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, but of every worker in America, because it proposes to recognize in federal law low wages and long hours.

"If the precedent is established of excluding large numbers of employees without a factual basis merely because of the demand of an employer pressure group, no worker covered by this Act can long expect to receive its benefits. Such a legislative reward is an invitation to other employer pressure groups to secure a similar exemption for their workers.

"Moreover, in recognizing intolerably long hours for hundreds of thousand of employees, the Bill would handicap labor unions in securing reasonable hours in their collective bargaining agreements.

"But even this doesn't satisfy the opponents of labor. It is not enough to exempt from the benefits of the Act loggers, packers of fresh fruits and vegetables, tobacco stemmers, and to impose intolerably long hours upon employees of canners, slaughtering houses, terminal grain elevators and upon thousands of others, and to foster underpaid homework. Now I am advised that these groups and others seeking exemptions are undertaking to have the House consider this Bill under a rule which will permit amendments from the floor, at which time proposals to exempt all clerical workers, all wholesalers, all canners, all packers, all sawmill operators, all telephone and telegraph workers, all miners, all truckers and all warehousemen will be pressed.

"Every workingman in America has real cause for immediate concern because this legislation is being supported by well-financed lobby groups who are hell-bent on taking from clerical and industrial workers the social gains which have been made during the last year."

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