

Minimum Wage-Small Change

Pressured by the rising anger of the working class, Congress has been forced to consider a minimum wage boost from \$2.30 to \$2.65 an hour. The legislation which passed the House of Representatives on September 15th would directly benefit 4.6 million workers.

At the same time, the House cut-back on the number of workers affected by the proposed wage hike. Giving with one hand while taking away with the other, the House robbed possibly 3.5 to 4 million other workers of the protection of the new minimum wage law. It exempted companies with sales less than \$500,000 a year, raising the present \$250,000 ceiling.

In addition, the House voted down a measure which would have abolished the notorious "tip-credit" system. Under this system waitresses, waiters and other workers have to kill themselves hustling for tips just so they'll make a decent living, since their bosses are allowed to pay only half the minimum wage.

YOUTH "SUB-MINIMUM" IS ATTACK ON ENTIRE CLASS

A third measure which was barely defeated would have set a 15% lower minimum wage for workers under 19 years old during their first six months on the job. This was a clear attempt to suck even more profits out of the youth, taking advantage of the fact that they are entering the job market for the first time with the least skills and job experience and are the least organized. For example, fast-food monopolies like McDonalds rely heavily on young workers and always pays the barest minimum. A "sub-minimum" would serve to pull down the wages of the entire class. Even more sinister, the measure would split the working class, pitting young against old, as the capitalists would replace older workers with cheaper youth labor. This bill is sure to be pushed again in the Senate.

George Meany and other top hacks of the AFL-CIO furthered their spineless sell-out character. First they consciously kept the broad rank and file out of the struggle for a higher minimum wage so they could sell-out behind closed doors. Second, they even "compromised" on the original \$3.00 an hour starting wage, lowering it to \$2.65, leaving an urban family of four about \$1,000 a year below the poverty level set by the capitalists themselves.

RAISE MINIMUM WAGE, EXTEND COVERAGE AND ORGANIZE!

A higher minimum wage would especially affect the non-unionized sector of the working class, many of whom are oppressed nationalities, women and youth.

The minimum wage law affects this sector most because they are the

least organized. It is obvious that you can't feed a family on \$2.65 an hour or anywhere near it. The capitalists figure to use the low wage level to force workers to work overtime. This overtime then, is not really overtime in the normal sense, it is regular time to get an income that can feed your family with. This is why the hourly wage system in general and the minimum hourly wage in particular must be viewed in relation to the length of the working day.

Again, we want to emphasize that the minimum wage law affects most industries which aren't unionized or have very weak unions where the leadership has sold out long ago.

Despite all of its limitations and inherent defects, we support minimum wage laws, since they have been fought for by workers around the country. Because of this we always support a higher minimum wage and all fights to extend the coverage and enforcement of these laws. ■

political economy