A REPORT ON CONGRESS

By Lane Kirkland

IF WE HAD ONLY their own speeches and press releases by which to judge the men and women who seek our votes, every election contest would seem a choice between vamps.

Fortunately, we have a better, more accurate gauge—voting records. What did Sen. Jones or Rep. Smith do when the chips were down on important issues? What is their real record (as opposed to their self-rating?) How did they vote?

The following pages tell you. They tell you how 100 U.S. senators and 435 representatives—your own among them—cast their votes when issues that count for working people and their unions came before the Congress.

BUT THE RECORD inside divulges more than the “right” and “wrong” votes printed by the name of each member of Congress. It provides insights into the temper of an entire session of Congress and records a large part of its history.

Reading the descriptions of the issues tells you that labor and other progressive groups were forced to fight numbers of defensive struggles to protect laws such as OSHA, Davis-Bacon, the mine safety act, even the eight-hour day.

Nevertheless, there were significant labor victories. Two labor-supported nominees for National Labor Relations Board positions were approved by the Senate after breaking conservative filibusters. Notwithstanding the all-out efforts of the rightists to torpedo them, OSHA and Davis-Bacon are still intact.

FINALLY, the record inside illustrates a valuable lesson in practical politics. In November we need to re-elect every single congressional friend we have and, if possible, strengthen their ranks. The mathematics are clear: a measure concerning aid to disabled workers, described inside, was defeated by a 47-47 tie vote in the Senate. Three right-wing senators elected for the first time in 1978—Jennings (Iowa), Armstrong (Colo.), Humphrey (N.H.)—voted against the AFL-CIO position. Had the senators three years ago still been in the Senate, three more votes would have been tallied for disabled workers, three fewer against.

AGAIN THIS year, ultra-conservatives are challenging large numbers of pro-worker incumbents. Corporate, trade group and right-wing political action committees will out-spend labor PAC’s by more than 5-1 and are lavishing tremendous sums on these challengers. Money is their strongest weapon. Ours is people.

Only with our votes can we beat back the right wing. If all union members vote—if you vote—for COPE-endorsed candidates who have earned our support, when the AFL-CIO publishes a voting record next year there will be no cause to explain that unions had gone through a “defensive” session in the Congress. And there will be no need—better yet, no examples—to illustrate the high cost of losing friends.

This special section carries labor’s 1990 report cards on Congress. This year’s analysis includes votes from October 1979 through Aug. 6, 1980. Congressmen and Senators have been judged on 19 key issues—“pro” or “anti” on the basis of the position the AFL-CIO took on the legislation. The tables also include the cumulative voting record and cumulative “right” percentage of each member since election to the House or Senate.
Labor's Stand on Major Issues in the House

1. Protection of Prevailing Wages

Defending the inflated defense in 1979, House conservatives continued their unrelenting attack on the Davis-Bacon Act in 1969. The 40-year-old law requires payment of prevailing wages to workers on federally funded construction projects. That gives low local contractors an unfair labor advantage, as the Davis-Bacon law requires wages that are too low to attract competent craftsmen. During House debate on legislation providing federal financial assistance to economically distressed states and cities, Rep. Robert Walker (R-Pa.) tried to strike the Davis-Bacon protections from the bill. Against this anti-worker amendment was overwhelmingly defeated by a 130-264 vote on Jan. 31, 1980.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

2. Collective Bargaining Rights for Hospital Workers

In 1976 the National Labor Relations Board ruled that hospital interns and residents are "students" and therefore not entitled to the protections of federal labor law. These employees now routinely work 60 to 100 hour workweeks at low rates of pay. Yet, these workers are trained to identify and improve their own working conditions. Their long hours can undermine adequate hospital health care and unnecessarily jeopardize patients for another—untrained medical workers.

In 1980, Rep. Frank Thompson (D-N.J.) sponsored legislation to restore labor law protections for these workers in less than two weeks after shooting down a labor-backer bill to help fight inflation by controlling hospital costs. The medical school Board was replaced by another labor law bill by a 167-227 vote on Nov. 28, 1979.

For—Wrong. Against—Wrong.

3. Workers' Pension Rights

To provide worker pensions, the 1974 pension protection law set up a revolving fund system. Contributions paid by employers were required to be invested in high-quality bonds to maintain a portfolio of investments. If assets fell below the required levels, employers were required to make up the difference. In 1966, the AFT-CIO took legal action to maintain the pension fund at parity by appealing a district court's 1966 order to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1980, the AFT-CIO issued a press release stating that the Supreme Court had ruled in 1965 to offer financial aid to hard-hit communities to help them attract new investment or revive failing businesses. A key part of the court's decision was that employers and employees should pay their fair share of the cost to keep the pension fund strong. This decision should be reversed.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

4. Unemployment Benefits

A 1976 congressionally-approved revision, effective in 1980, reduced the unemployment benefits for persons who also receive pensions. This anti-worker provision limits the ability of unemployed persons to maintain their standard of living while they seek work.

The AFT-CIO has worked to repeal the provision on a national basis. Congress has not responded to the AFT-CIO's effort. The AFT-CIO's position is that unemployment benefits should be based on the amount of the employer's contribution to the pension while paying out benefits. As a result, the AFT-CIO has been working to improve the effectiveness of its proposed legislation.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

5. Auto Industry Jobs

Massive retrenching and the loss of the automobile industry's major suppliers and manufacturers—Chrysler—was on the brink of economic collapse in late 1979. The huge cost of the automobile industry's workers and suppliers are now swelling the jobless rolls as Chrysler auto workers hang in the balance. Several states and community organizations were also threatened with economic disaster if Chrysler closed its doors.

To protect that from happening, the AFT-CIO-backed legislation providing a 1.55 billion federal loan guarantee to Chrysler. The loan was dependent upon the company finding a billion dollars in matching funds from private sources, dealers, and creditors. The House version demanded 500 million in wage concessions from Chrysler union workers. By a vote of 271-136, on Dec. 18, 1979, the House approved the loan package.

For—Right. Against—Wrong.

6. Public Works Jobs

In 1979 the House approved labor-backed legislation expanding funding for the Economic Development Administration, which was crucial in 1965 to offer federal financial aid to small communities to help attract new investment or revive failing businesses. A key part of the economic development program is that employers and employees should pay their fair share of the cost to maintain the economic development program. The House version demanded 400 million in wage concessions from Chrysler union workers. By a 148-250 vote on Nov. 14, 1979.

For—Wrong. Against—Wrong.

7. Food Stamps for Jobless Workers

Jobless workers trying to feed their families with food stamps became another target of the congressional drive to balance the federal budget and cut spending. At a time when millions of Americans were starving, House conservatives tried to force jobless workers to pay back the value of food stamps they received. A key part of the House's plan was to put a meal ticket on the table. The House passed a bill requiring jobless workers to pay 25 cents for every dollar of food stamps they received.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

8. Balanced Budget I

In a political climate of balance the federal budget, Congress in 1980 slammed the door on such programs as education, health, transportation, and energy development. An estimated half-million workers would lose their jobs as a direct result of these symbolic cuts. Particularly hard-hit in the recent recession were the very federal jobs programs used to buttress the shock of economic downturns. Ironically, no sooner had Congress balanced the budget than higher unemployment and continuing inflation have threatened to derail the effort again.

The AFT-CIO had strongly opposed balancing the federal ledger at a time of economic decline, terming it an empty political gesture that would do nothing to address the root cause of increasing economic costs, exorbitant interest rates and rising food and medical care costs. The AFT-CIO warned that the proposed cuts would not only hinder all of the federal spending programs required by a balanced budget would increase unemployment while deepening the recession.

The House consideration of the 1981 budget resolution, which sets spending targets for the upcoming fiscal year, Rep. Richard Ottinger (D-N.Y.) led a labor-backed effort to reinstate those spending cuts. The Ottinger amendment would have balanced the budget instead through various tax reforms and other economic revenue-raising measures. His package proposal was rejected by a 75-316 vote on Apr. 30, 1980.

For—Right. Against—Wrong.

9. Balanced Budget II

The rigid spending ceilings of the balanced budget enabled conservatives to cut the House on the unmentionable position of making huge cuts for national priority—fighting the recession—only to increase minimum wages for another—raising that as national defense.

Conservatives, sensing an opportunity to further whittle labor-backed programs, joined ranks with House Majority Leader Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.) in an effort to cut $5 billion more from domestic spending programs and transfer those funds to the defense budget. The House amendment demanded a 20-percent across-the-board cut in all federal discretionary spending. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration, the Federal Trade Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency were all hit.

The amendment, a clear-cut conservative assault on the federal government, was rejected by the House on a 104-146 vote on May 1, 1980.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

10. Balanced Budget III

Despite opposition from labor, civil rights, education, environmental, consumer and other public-interest groups, the House passed the first balanced budget proposal by a 225-193 vote on May 7, 1980. The bill cut $16 billion in spending from key domestic programs and would throw over a half-million American workers out of the unemployment lines.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

11. Aid to Cities and States

In early 1980, the House cleared a $1 billion bill to provide economic assistance to economically distressed states and cities. The legislation was designed to help these same communities maintain public services and avoid massive layoffs during the current recession. Leading the conservative effort to weaken the bill, Rep. Thomas Kuchel (R-Ore.) tried to insert a provision that would cut back on community programs that are expected to slash funding nearly in half. His motion to reduce the bill was defeated by a 178-215 vote on Jan. 31, 1980.

For—Wrong. Against—Wrong.

12. Energy—Oil Industry Profits

Early in 1979, President Carter decontrolled the price of domestically produced crude oil, an action that was expected to increase American Petroleum industry profits by $11 billion over the next ten years. This action has already driven the price of a barrel of crude oil to $30, helping to bolster the American economy and the pocketbook of American workers.

To recover billions of dollars in excess oil company profits for development of alternative energy sources, the administration proposed legislation. The AFT-CIO found the proposal inadequate and, facing a Congress unwilling to enact price controls, urged a national windfall tax.

The windfall profits tax bill that emerged from conference committee was far away less than 25 percent of the $11 billion in excess oil industry profits over the next five years.
13. Energy II—Gas Price Regulation

Amid soaring oil industry profits resulting primarily from President Carter's decision to remove federal price controls on domestic oil, the oil lobby sought to gouge consumers even more by eliminating federal price controls on gasoline. Under current controls, the pump price can only be increased to reflect inflation and higher crude oil costs. Federal regulation also provides for an allocation system to assure an even distribution of supply throughout the country.

Despite price increases of some 52 percent over the past twelve months, the House at first voted for an amendment by Rep. James Court (R-N.J.) to tear price controls as well as the allocation system. Then on a second vote on Oct. 24, 1979, the House rejected the Court amendment 189-223.

For—Wrong Against—Right.

14. Energy III—Energy Development

A key element in the drive for energy independence was legislation to establish a five-member Energy Mobilization Board with broad powers to expedite the decision-making process for national energy projects. The bill was designed to eliminate delays, duplication and overlapping challenges to energy projects while preserving environmental values as well as state and local responsibilities. The board would be empowered to set project deadlines after consultation with state and local officials. Judicial review of its decisions would be expedited. Any waiver of federal statutes implementing public development—including labor, civil rights and water rights laws—would only be made upon the recommendation of the board with the concurrence of Congress and the President.

During House debate, Rep. Morris Udall (D-Ariz.) tried to weaken the bill by deleting the waiver procedure. His substitute bill was killed on a 192-215 vote on Nov. 1, 1979.

For—Wrong Against—Right.

15. Energy IV—Energy Development

A last-ditch effort by a coalition of House conservatives and liberals succeeded in recommitting to conference—and possibly killing—the labor-backed Energy Mobilization Board bill. This action was approved on June 27, 1980, when the House adopted 232-131 a motion to recommit by Reps. Sam Devine (R-Ohio) and the delay resulting from this maneuver may have doomed the legislation in the 96th Congress.

For recommit—Wrong Against—recommit—Right.

16. Health Care Costs

In 1979, the average cost of one day's hospital care was an astronomical $226. Rising hospital costs are a leading cause of inflation and a major part of the nation's spending $184.4 billion 1979 health-care bill. Translated for a family of four, over $3,200 yearly is spent on medical services.

The Carter Administration and labor again pushed legislation in 1979 to hold down these spiraling hospital costs by implementing mandatory controls to go into effect only for those hospitals unable or unwilling to keep increased costs to no more than 11.6 percent. Hospitals in states that already have mandatory cost-containment programs would be exempt. This legislation was strongly opposed by the American Medical Association and the hospital industry. The labor-backed bill was torpedoed when the House on Nov. 14, 1979, voted 234-166 approval of a substitute bill offered by Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) creating a commission to further study the problem.

For—Wrong Against—Right.

17. Civil Rights—Housing

The 1968 Fair Housing Act was designed to outlaw discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. However, a weak enforcement mechanism based primarily on conciliation has permitted discrimination to persist.

The key civil rights fight of 1980 occurred over legislation by Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) to put teeth into the 1968 law by placing administrative law judges (ALJ) in the Dept. of Justice to hear complaints and impose penalties subject to review by a district court. Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) led the conservative effort to sink the bill by wiping out the ALJ system. His amendment was stricken as the House on June 11, 1980, narrowly adopted a 257-204 vote a substitute proposal by Rep. Mike Synar (D-Okl.) preserving the ALJ system.

For—Wrong Against—Won.

18. Election Financing Reform

In 1974, campaign costs for the House and Senate were about $3.5 million. But the 1978 price tag had jumped to over $90 million. Meanwhile, corporate political action committees (PACs) numbering 92 in 1974 have grown to more than 1,100. In the 1978 congressional elections over 100 business PACs, 500 trade association PACs and several dozen pro-business, right-wing groups spent nearly $25 million—two and one-half times as much as all labor union political contributions. This dollar deluge coupled with skyrocketing campaign costs, threatens to undermine the integrity of our electoral system and the credibility of the legislative process.

To stem this tide, the AFL-CIO, a long-time proponent of public financing of federal elections, pushed legislation to curb the amount of PAC contributions to House elections. The bill, offered as an amendment by Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) to a funding bill for the Federal Election Commission, would have limited total contributions that a candidate could receive from all PACs to $70,000—$85,000 if a runoff election occurred—and would have limited individual PAC contributions to each candidate to a maximum of $9,000. Backed by strong support from labor and other public-interest groups, the Obey amendment was approved 217-198 on Oct. 17, 1979.

For—Right Against—Wrong.

19. Consumer Protection

On the heels of defeating legislation in the 95th Congress to establish a badly needed Consumer Protection Agency, the lobbying of big business in the 96th Congress aimed their guns at the consumer protection powers of the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC is charged with protecting the public from marketplace monopolies and fraudulent business practices.

During House debate on an FTC funding bill, Rep. Marty Russo (D-III) tried to stop an FTC consumer rulemaking requiring the funeral industry to disclose the prices of its goods and services while prohibiting certain deceptive misrepresentations found to be rampant in the industry. For union members, the high cost of funerals has seriously eroded the survival benefits left to nest of kin through fringe benefit life insurance or other coverages. The FTC price-disclosure rule was seen as a sure way to stimulate competition and lower funeral costs. But, the House sided with the funeral industry against these consumers and approved the Russo amendment by a 223-147 vote on Nov. 14, 1979.
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Labor's Stand on Major Issues in the Senate

1. Lubbers Nomination
Few positions in the federal government have as far-reaching an effect on union organizing and collective bargaining as the office of general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board. Under the National Labor Relations Act, the general counsel is charged with writing the rules of the NRLRB by deciding which unfair labor practice complaints should be issued and how the resulting cases should be litigated. The general counsel also is in charge of NRLRB regional offices and the board's cases in court. Because of these considerable responsibilities the general counsel is nominated by the President and then must be confirmed by the Senate.

In 1979 President Carter nominated William A. Lubbers, a 27-year veteran of the NRLRB, to be its next general counsel. The AFL-CIO strongly backed this well-qualified nominee while business and labor organizations, and the right-wing, attempted to block his nomination by a filibuster led by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). The filibuster was short-lived as the Senate by a 62-34 vote on Apr. 22, 1980, obtained the three-fifths vote necessary to invoke cloture and end debate. The nomination was later approved.

For cloture—Right. Against cloture—Wrong.

2. Zimmerman Nomination
The business-conservative alliance in the Senate, stung by its earlier defeat on the nomination of Lubbers as general counsel of the NRLRB, sought to even the score by nominating and confirming a Conservative, John A. Zimmerman, nominee to be a member of the board. Again Sen. Hatch led a filibuster to block confirmation. The Chamber of Commerce of the U.S. joined with a telephone-telegram campaign against Zimmerman aimed at "swinging" Senators. The filibuster was broken on the third try as the Senate by a 63-31 vote on Aug. 5, 1980, obtained the 60-plus-vote margin necessary to invoke cloture and end debate. The nomination was later confirmed 68-27.

Zimmerman had been a long-time Republican minority counsel for the Senate Labor Committee and served as a principle adviser to Sen. Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.). His nomination had the full support of the AFL-CIO.

For cloture—Right. Against cloture—Wrong.

3. Job Safety I
Since its enactment in 1970, the Occupational Safety & Health Act, which guarantees workers in the private sector a safe working environment, has been significantly weakened as a result of congressional approval of a succession of amendments. One such amendment, added by Sen. Richard Schweiker (R-Pa.), last year to the fiscal year 1980 Labor Dept. appropriations bill, exempts from routine federal job safety inspection businesses with ten or fewer employees which classify as so-called "non-hazardous" workplaces. As a result, 37 percent of all businesses and more than 5.2 million workers are unprotected. Even worse, penalties cannot be assessed for serious occupational safety violations found as a result of an investigation of a worker's complaint about a safety hazard in an exempted establishment. Based on 1978 data, 1,228 fatalities and 190,000 injuries occurred at jobsites now exempted by this amendment.

This provision scheduled to expire at the end of the current appropriation, Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.) led the conservative, big business drive to keep it alive. On July 29, 1980, Boren succeeded at the Senate agreed by a 48-34 vote to add his anti-worker, amendment, retaining the Schweiker provision, to an un-related pension reform bill.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

4. Job Safety II—Mine Safety
The 1977 Mine Safety & Health Act transferred to the Labor Dept. job safety jurisdiction over the mining industry. Given the hazardous nature of mining operations, MSHA has developed more stringent safety standards and employs tougher enforcement procedures than those for workers covered by OSHA.

The conservative assault against MSHA came during Senate debate on an unrelated pension reform bill. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) proposed to weaken MSHA's job safety authority by moving responsibility over stone, sand, gravel and clay from MSHA to OSHA. These classifications of mining account for half of all fatalities in the metal and nonmetal mining industry. Despite AFL-CIO opposition, the Wallop amendment was approved by a 52-37 vote on July 29, 1980.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

5. Eight-Hour Day
Even the longstanding guarantee of the eight-hour day did not escape the conservative assault. During debate on a coal-related energy bill, Sen. Henry Bellmon (R-Oklahoma) tried to eliminate the requirement of the Contract Work Hours Standards Act and the Walsh-Healey Act that employers with federal contracts pay overtime rates for work in excess of eight hours per day. Without such overtime pay protections, the eight-hour standard would be seriously undermined by employers demanding a longer workday from their employees without having to pay just compensation. This anti-worker amendment was killed when the Senate approved 58-36 a tabling motion by Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) on June 14, 1980.

For tabling—Right. Against tabling—Wrong.

6. Protection of Prevailing Wages
The unremitting conservative attack on the nation's basic labor law continued in 1980 as once again the Davis-Bacon Act became an issue of construction. The 48-year-old law requires the payment of prevailing wages to workers on federally financed construction projects. This gives local contractors who uphold the labor standards of the community a fair chance to compete for government projects, rather than being undercut by outside firms bringing in cut-rate labor.

The Davis-Bacon Act also assures stability in a notoriously unstable industry, guarantees adequate wage rates for the workers, the recruitment, training and maintenance of a skilled construction workforce, and helps protect the government against fly-by-night operators seeking to win government contracts by paying wages too low to attract competent craftsmen.

Leading the attack against Davis-Bacon, Sen. Roger Jepsen (R-Iowa) tried to cripple its application to construction of federal buildings by exempting application of the law to at least ten percent of these construction projects. On a 68-31 vote in June 20, 1980.

For tabling—Right. Against tabling—Wrong.

7. Protecting Migrant Farm Workers
In 1963, Congress enacted the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act to safeguard migrant farm workers from a well-documented pattern of exploitation and the hazards of working in the fields during harvest. The law also imposes safety and transportation requirements on labor contractors.

During debate on an unrelated child nutrition bill, Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.) successfully added an amendment that all but repealed the 1963 law and its protections primarily by exempting all farmers, farm cooperatives, food processors, canners and other agricultural operations. Despite strong AFL-CIO objections, the Boren amendment was approved by a 57-37 vote on July 24, 1980.

For—Wrong. Against—Right.

8. Unemployment Compensation
One of the first programs victimized by the balanced budget panic was extended federal unemployment compensation benefits for jobless American workers. In the panic to cut federal spending the Senate slashed jobless aid funds at the same time the recession was putting more Americans out of work.

Cuts in unemployment benefits came on a "reconciliation" bill forcing a wide range of spending cuts in response to Senate approval of the first "balanced" budget resolution. One of several worker, unemployment compensation reductions would require jobless workers to take any "reasonable" job offered or risk losing their unemployment benefits. In other words, a take-a-look, $10 per hour skilled worker could be forced to take a job at the niximum wage or be lost the unemployment benefits. An effort by Sen. Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.) to knock out this regressive provision was defeated by a 27-60 vote on June 30, 1980.

For—Right. Against—Wrong.

9. Unemployment Benefits II
A 1976 congressionally-approved revision, effective in 1980, cut unemployment benefits for retirees who also receive pensions. This regressive provision allows states to offset dollar for dollar, the unemployment compensation benefits payable to an individual receiving social security, pension, retirement pay, annuity or any other similar payment based on the individual's previous work. It result is thousands of pensioners, who had taken jobs to augment their pensions but were laid off in the current recession, now find their unemployment compensation reduced by the amount of their pension benefits.

During debate on a bill that slashed extended federal unemployment benefits for jobless workers, the Senate approved a labor-backed modifier of the 1976 law limiting the pension offset to cases where it is a worker's pension and unemployment benefits are attributable to the same employer. Sen. Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.) tried to improve upon that and further ease the 1976 restrictions by requiring states to exclude employers' contributions to their pension in deducting the amount of pension payments from unemployment benefits. His amendment failed by a 23-69 vote on Mar. 4, 1980.

For—Right. Against—Wrong.

10. Unemployment Benefits III
A key federal unemployment benefits program is Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA). Created in 1962, the program is specifically designed to assist U.S. workers and firms hurt by foreign trade. Over the last decade these industries—loss of jobs and loss of business—have occurred at an ever-increasing rate because of explicit

(Continued on next page)
Labor's Stand on Major Issues in the Senate

(Continued from preceding page)

The U.S. mail was one of the major federal programs targeted for huge budget reductions in the congressional standoff to balance the federal budget. The Senate Budget Committee proposed in the first budget resolution, which sets spending targets for the coming fiscal year, a massive $16 billion reduction in federal spending. This included a $3.50 billion reduction in funds for the Postal Service.

This spending cut alone would have eliminated Saturday mail delivery and cost 40,000 postal workers their jobs. However, elimination of Saturday service would not be cost-effective because of the logistics of mail workloads would produce. Therefore, termination of one day of mail delivery was a likely alternative if the postal budget cuts were enacted. During floor debate Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) successfully restored $300 million to the budget bill to save Saturday service.

Defenders of this program of defense cuts were budgeted to balance the budget. The Senate Finance Committee was the major federal programs included anti-recession programs in order to increase defense outlays even beyond the level of national. The floor, Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) tried to cut the defense budget by $2 billion and restore the funds to anti-recession and other domestic programs. On a tabling motion by Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), the Senate rejected the Nelson motion by a 64-30 vote on May 7, 1980.

For tabling—Wrong. Against tabling—Right.

16. Assisting Disabled Workers

Another victim of the balanced-budget drive was the federal social security system's benefits to permanently disabled workers unable to re-employ. In 1979, the Caesar Chavez proposal was cutbacks in disability insurance benefits at a time when participation rates were at a 20-year low and the disability fund was running a surplus. In 1980, the Senate Finance Committee reported legislation to lower benefits for future disabled workers by an average of 15 percent and to sharply restrict the right of young disabled workers to receive low-wage earnings in computing benefits. The AFL-CIO strongly opposed these cutbacks. During Senate debate, labor backed an amendment by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) to largely restore provisions of existing law that would maintain the present disability benefit formula. The Senate rejected the Metzenbaum amendment by a 47-47 tie vote on Jan. 30, 1980.

For—Right. Against—Wrong.

17. Energy I—Oil Industry Profits

Early in 1979, President Carter decontrolled the price of domestically produced crude oil, an action the Senate Finance Committee was cost consumers $1.5 billion over the next 15 years. This action is already having a catastrophic inflationary effect on the economy and the pocketbooks of workers.

To realize millions of dollars in excess oil company profits for development of alternate fuel sources, the President proposed a windfall profits tax. The AFL-CIO found the proposal inadequate and, facing a Congress unwilling to restrict price controls, urged a tougher windfall tax. However, the Senate Finance Committee cut the Carter proposal in half, thus allowing a windfall giveaway of over $50 billion to the oil company giants.

During floor debate, the AFL-CIO backed several amendments to increase the windfall profits tax in the big oil companies. One such proposal was offered by Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) and Minority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.). By lowering the portion of categories of oil exempted by the Finance Committee bill, it would add $10.8 billion in higher oil company taxes. In a parliametary maneuver, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) tried to table the first amendment to which the Bradley-Byrd amendment was offered. That tabling effort failed by a 44-43 vote on Dec. 12, 1979. The Bradley-Byrd amendment was later approved.

For tabling—Wrong. Against tabling—Right.

18. Energy II—Energy Development

One of the most vital roles of the 96th Congress, designed to secure energy independence for the United States, was the $20 billion proposal to provide financial incentives private industry to develop synthetic fuels. Once oil prices cycle, thousands of new job opportunities for American workers.

During floor debate Sen. Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.) tried to slash in half the funds for this energy program. His amendment also knocked out a key AFL-CIO-backed provision to allow government ownership of synthetic fuel corporations if they proved to be insufficient interest in the private sector. On a tabling motion by Sen. Bennett Johnson (D-La.), the Tsongas proposal was defeated 55-17 on Nov. 7, 1980.

For tabling—Right. Against tabling—Wrong.

19. Food Stamps

Senate conservatives went on a rampage in 1980 in an effort to slash spending for several key federal programs. One such program—food stamps for the poor—provides about $1.05 a day per person to help feed millions of impoverished Americans. Sen. James McClure (R-Ida.) offered an amendment to a food stamp funding bill to reduce benefits for poor families whose children are eligible to receive a meal through the federal school lunch program.