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Could I ask Senator Beutler a couple questions?

SENATOR CUDABACK: You may. Senator Beutler, would you respond?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Sure.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Senator, the figures you just gave on the percent of people getting minimum wage, where did you get that information?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay. Senator, one other question. You know, earlier in your opening you talked about how it would just be the people that pay the low wages that will be affected by that but...by this bill, but would you admit that there is a trickle-up effect and it does affect all wages?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator, I think there is such an effect and I applaud such an effect, because what's happening now is that the whole wage structure is deteriorating. And what's happening in this country is that the middle class is shrinking and we're becoming like a third world country, where there's a group of people who are really well off and another whole group of people who are poor, and I don't want that to happen.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay.

SENATOR BEUTLER: I want there to be a large middle class, and the minimum wage is one of the underlying network structures for a strong middle class wage. I believe that.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: The question I have for you is when the wages all go up all across the board, and you admitted earlier on that inflation will come into play, businesses will have to pass that on, what did that actually buy? What did it buy anybody when inflation comes into play so everything goes up? What do they buy more than they have now?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Well, Senator, inflation can't be looked at in a vacuum. At the same time that inflation is going on,