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FLOOR DEBATE

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productivity is going on, and that's one of the things that is confusing your efforts, I think. On the one hand, you're fighting the Wal-Mart's, which represent productivity increases. On the other hand, you're talking about minimum wages. But you can't look at them without looking at each other.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Do...

SENATOR BEUTLER: And if you have productivity increases then everybody gains, but what happened during the 1990 is that the upper one-fifth of America gained and the lower one-fifth of America lost. There was no even closely parallel gain among all working classes.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Well, I can tell you that, as a businessperson, I'm not in the upper one-fifth or the lower one-fifth, but I lost also. And small business in Nebraska and America lost, I can guarantee you that. You talked about we're suppressing wages. I don't see that we're suppressing wages. We're just trying not to mandate, mandate wages. You talked about fast-food restaurants working for \$5.15 an hour. Everything I've heard about fast-food restaurants, the majority of those get paid considerably more than \$5.15 an hour. So if you had some information, if you have some facts that a majority get \$5.15, I'd appreciate hearing that. You talked about with the wages as we have them now we're going to put more people on government programs, but I contend we're going to put more people on government programs as we drive more small businesses out of business. And I challenge you to go up and down main streets in the town I represent and you look, you look at the empty storefronts. Senator Schimek mentioned earlier that no businesses go out of business. It's all something they say, but other than they were going to anyway. But you go and you look and you see those communities. There are so many empty buildings it is pathetic, and that's at a time when we're having trouble with our schools, keeping our schools open. There's not enough students there. And we're all worried about state aid and what are we going to do, and we're going to raise taxes. I mean, so that's a very, very major problem. Senator Foley talked about high school kids and even college students and we need to pay them more, but have any of you hired...