

Supply

the average wage for producing shoes is about 70 cents, one-tenth of the average wage in Canada. Seven dollars, the average wage in the footwear manufacturing industry, is not an extortionate amount of money. If the worker brings in \$14,000 a year gross, he is not living high off the hog but he might be above the poverty level. To cut him to one tenth of that, 70 cents, which is the Government's idea of competition, would ruin not only those workers but much more of Canada.

● (1600)

I have not mentioned Italy. I have referred to the bad labour conditions in many of the countries in the West Pacific. Italy, of course, is a European country and we may suppose that, therefore, the labour conditions there are comparable to the labour conditions in Canada. They are not. I quote from the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights in its report for 1980 to the United Nations Working Group of Experts on Slavery. In its opening statement it states:

When you buy your next pair of shoes stamped "Made in Italy" spare a thought for the thousand of child workers of Aversa, near Naples who most likely helped stitch, glue and finish them, in conditions which would have been entirely familiar to Charles Dickens.

Child labour is a growing trend, according to this document. It is fundamental to the organization of production and profits within the contemporary Italian economy. The children who were interviewed by representatives of this society started working from the age of 10 and up. Most children were working a six-hour day although in some cases they worked more than nine hours. All children worked a six-day week and all were poorly paid. The children's weekly earnings ranged from 7,000 lire to 15,000 lire per week, and thus always fell far short of the basic legal minimum wage paid to adults which is 75,000 lire per week.

It is reported that as adult unemployment rises in Italy, the employment of children at a small fraction of adult wages is also rising. The conditions of work are very severe and health hazardous. The society quotes one of the child workers as saying:

The place where 25 of us worked was 10 metres by 2.5 metres high and it was impossible to breathe because of the glue fumes. Our cloakroom was a tiny room in which the gum and solvents were also stored; when work was over and we went to get changed, we would find our clothes damp, cold and reeking of gum.

Italy is a civilized country. We have to ask ourselves, are there no laws? The answer is, of course, that there are laws. The report of the society states, and I quote:

—the enforcement of the legislation protecting children is in the hands of the Labour Inspectorate; its effectiveness is handicapped, for it is understaffed and overburdened with work. According to Dr. F. Coppola (Departmental Head of the Provincial Inspectorate of Labour, Naples) in Naples up to 1975, four officials were allocated exclusively to the child labour sector.

The report continues:

—the position is summarized by Neapolitan journalist Eleanora Puntillo: "In my opinion there is no point in talking about legislation. When the law is so systematically and widely infringed, it is as if it did not exist".

What about the international labour organization and its conventions? The fact is that Italy has not yet ratified the ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment.

We are talking about competitiveness. We are not talking about a Third World country coming out of starvation. One of the oldest developed countries in Europe, Italy, is using the labour of children for as much as six hours or more per day, six days a week, paying about one fifth of the minimum wage for adults. It is using these children in conditions which none of us would want to see our children endure even if we were willing to take them out of school at the age of 10 to send them into the factories. Some of these conditions are deadly. I quote again from the report of the Anti-Slavery Society:

—the extensive use of poisonous glues in the cramped conditions of the leather workshops is a major health hazard and liable to cause glue polyneuritis. This is a disease caused by poisoning from toxic substances within glue vapour; it affects the nervous system causing paralysis of the joints, disability and muscular pains accompanied by cramp and swelling. Untreated, the disease can result in death. Over 25 per cent of the workers affected are under fourteen and although there have been several cases of glue polyneuritis over the last five years, it is still not treated as an industrial disease.

Those are the competitive conditions which this Government is asking us to match of a country where the police smash and jail trade union organizers such as in South Korea, of a country where 10-year-old children are forced to leave school in poisonous atmospheres so that it can sell cheap shoes abroad. If our Government wants Canadians to take their children out of school, not just to do work at home because that is already happening in Spadina and in some parts of Montreal, but to go into the factories and into the sweat-shops, as happened 200 years ago in Britain, then the Government will find itself alone in Canada because Canadians do not want that. Canadians are willing to pay a decent price to get a decent wage.

Recently, the Ontario Federation of Labour sent a telegram to the Prime Minister saying: "As the representative of 800,000 Ontario workers who are also consumers, the Ontario Federation of Labour opposes strongly the removal of import quotas for shoes and footwear. To remove the quotas is not only to jeopardize thousands of Canadian jobs but to subject consumers to the whim of foreign producers. Canada needs its own footwear industry." Very few of those 800,000 workers in Ontario work in the footwear factories of Spadina and Guelph and the other cities of Ontario. All the other workers agree, as workers and consumers, that we need to have our own footwear industry where we, as Canadians, can be responsible for the health conditions, for the wages and for the minimum age at which people can be economically compelled to go to work. The issue is much wider than Ontario. A few weeks ago there was a poll by Decima. One of our colleagues today was concerned about polling being done by an American firm. This, I believe, is a polling outfit which is used by the Government and I trust it is Canadian. The Decima poll finds