

# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

## THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILD LABOR IN INDIA

**HON. DAN BURTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, much attention was appropriately focussed on human rights abuses by the Indian Government against minorities in Kashmir and Punjab during recent consideration of H.R. 1868, the foreign aid appropriations bill for 1996. However, there exists another little-known human rights problem in India, which is every bit as grave. This problem, which received little discussion, is the exploitation of child labor. The United States Government and the international community have paid little attention to the prolific employment of young children. It is time to attend to this neglect.

Child labor in India is a grave and extensive problem. Children under the age of 14 are forced to work in glass-blowing, fireworks, and most commonly, carpet-making factories. While the Government of India reports about 20 million children laborers, other non-governmental organizations estimate the number to be closer to 50 million. Most prevalent in the northern part of India, the exploitation of child labor has become an accepted practice, and is viewed by the local population as necessary to overcome the extreme poverty in the region.

Child labor is one of the main components of the carpet industry. Factories pay children extremely low wages, for which adults refuse to work, while forcing the youngsters to slave under perilous and unhygienic labor conditions. Many of these children are migrant workers, the majority coming from northern India, who are sent away by their families to earn an income sent directly home. Thus, children are forced to endure the despicable conditions of the carpet factories, as their families depend on their wages.

The situation of the children at the factories is desperate. Most work around 12 hours a day, with only small breaks for meals. Ill-nourished, the children are very often fed only minimal staples. The vast majority of migrant child workers who cannot return home at night sleep alongside of their loom, further inviting sickness and poor health.

Taking aggressive action to eliminate this problem is difficult in a nation where 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas, most often stricken by poverty. Children are viewed as a form of economic security in this desolate setting, necessary to help supplement their families' income. Parents often sacrifice their children's education, as offspring are often expected to uphold their roles as wage-earning members of their clan.

The Indian Government has taken some steps to alleviate this monumental problem. In 1989, India invoked a law that made the employment of children under age 14 illegal, except in family-owned factories. However, this

law is rarely followed, and does not apply to the employment of family members. Thus, factories often circumvent the law through claims of hiring distant family. Also, in rural areas, there are few enforcement mechanisms, and punishment for factories violating the mandate is minimal, if not nonexistent.

Legal action taken against the proliferation of child labor often produces few results. Laws against such abuses have little effect in a nation where this abhorred practice is accepted as being necessary for poor families to earn an income. Thus, an extensive reform process is necessary to eliminate the proliferation of child labor abuses in India which strives to end the desperate poverty in the nation. Changing the structure of the workforce and hiring the high number of currently unemployed adults in greatly improved work conditions is only the first step in this lengthy process. New labor standards and wages must be adopted and medical examinations and minimum nutrition requirements must be established in India. Establishing schools and eliminating the rampant illiteracy that plagues the country would work to preserve structural changes. However, these changes cannot be accomplished immediately. Pressure from the international community, especially the United States Government, is absolutely necessary to bring about change in India.

I believe that it is imperative for the U.S. Congress and the Clinton administration to pay more attention to the exploitation of children in India as well as other areas in South and Southeast Asia. Currently, Germany has instigated a pilot program that places a stamp on all imported carpets that are child labor free, thus urging consumers to buy these products. Because of the high price range of these carpets, similar programs can and should be given serious consideration in the United States.

The Child Labor Deterrence Act of 1993, which is still under consideration, prohibits importing to the U.S. any product made, whole or in part, by children under 15 who are employed in industry. While this aspect of the bill may be effective, the United States needs to take action regarding child labor abuses, specifically targeted at India. Mr. Speaker, I call on every Member of Congress to pay more attention to this little-recognized problem. We must acknowledge the fact that we cannot continue to sustain the exploitation of children by purchasing carpets woven by the hands of children.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. JIM NUSSLE**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, July 24, I missed a series of rollcall votes—Rollcall Votes No. 555–562. Had I been present during those votes, I would have cast my vote in the following manner:

## Rollcall Votes

Number:	Position
555 (Gejdenson Amendment to H.R. 70) .....	No
556 (Miller Amendment to H.R. 70) .....	No
557 (Final Passage of H.R. 70) .....	Aye
558 (LaTourette Amendment to H.R. 2002) .....	No
559 (Foglietta Amendment to H.R. 2002) .....	No
560 (Smith Amendment to H.R. 2002) .....	Aye
561 (Smith Amendment to H.R. 2002) .....	Aye
562 (Hefley Amendment to H.R. 2002) .....	Aye

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

**HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 24, 1995

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my strong opposition to the amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan.

The administration's high-speed rail development program is designed to reduce the cost and improve the safety and performance of the kinds of high-speed rail projects that are most likely to find application in the United States.

The program is practical. It is targeted at safe, economical, environmentally friendly all-weather service by the year 2000 in all areas of the Nation. Such service alleviates the need for additional highway and airport capacity which are increasingly difficult and expensive to obtain.

And we're not talking about building new track here. It will make use of existing rail lines and doesn't require the expense of major new construction.

We have seen from the tremendous Amtrak ridership on the Northeast corridor that the public wants and will use high-speed rail technology throughout the country. This technology could be implemented in city pairs such as Detroit-Chicago, Chicago-St. Louis, Portland-Seattle, San Diego-Los Angeles, and Miami-Orlando, where trip times can be under 3 hours.

The Federal role proposed here is to provide the technology base. The States of Michigan, Illinois, Washington, California, Florida, and New York want high-speed rail and have already dedicated State funds. It is unreasonable and uneconomical to expect 15 or 20 States to each undertake technology development programs.

If this amendment were to pass, the progress that has already been made in this area will have been for naught. I understand that the gentleman is offering this amendment because he wants to save money. If his amendment passes, we will have thrown away the substantial and worthwhile investments we've made. Now that's a waste of money.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.