NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER DONATE NOW!
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Salvadorans paid 10 cents to sew $80 NFL jerseys

Thomas C. Fox | Feb. 7, 2010 NCR Today

I don't want to throw beer on your popcorn and potato chips today. But I want to share with you some information that seems timely and troubling.

According to a recent study, women trapped in Salvadoran sweatshops are paid 10 Cents to Sew $80 NFL football jerseys.

The jerseys have been sewn under illegal sweatshop conditions at the Chi Fung factory in El Salvador for at least the last four years, according to a new report by the National Labor Committee.

Often forced to work 12-hour shifts, workers were at the factory 61 to 65 hours a week, including 12 to 15 hours of obligatory overtime, which was unpaid. The workers were paid a below-subsistence wage of just 72 cents an hour, which meets less than a quarter of a family's basic subsistence needs for food, housing, healthcare and clothing.

An assembly line of 28 workers had a mandatory production goal of completing 2,300 NFL jerseys in the regular nine-hour shift, from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The production goal was 255 jerseys per hour, which meant that each of the 28 workers in effect had to sew nine jerseys per hour, or one jersey every 6.6 minutes. The workers were paid just 10 cents for each $80 Peyton Manning NFL jersey they sewed. This means that their wages amounted to just a little more than one-tenth of one percent of the jersey's retail price.

"It does not have to be this way," said National Labor Committee director Charles Kernaghan. "If the NFL and Reebok doubled the wages, so the workers and their families could climb out of misery and at least into poverty, the direct labor cost to sew the Peyton Manning jersey would still be just 20 ½ cents, or less than three-tenths of one percent of the shirt's retail price."

"The $250 million NFL-Reebok licensing mega-agreement has done nothing to lift workers across the developing world who sew NFL garments out of abject poverty," said Kernaghan.

"We always knew they were cheating us," one Salvadoran woman told the NLC. "We knew they weren't paying overtime, but we don't have any other choice ?many of us were trapped without any alternatives."

Any of the NFL-Reebok workers daring to exercise their legal right to organize a union would be immediately fired and blacklisted.

Cutting and running would only further punish the workers, who have already suffered enough. Reebok and the NFL should keep their production in Chi Fung and use their considerable power and influence to improve factory conditions.

"If the NFL showed half as much concern for human and worker rights as they do about the counterfeiting of their jerseys, this factory could be cleaned up overnight," Kernaghan said. "There is not a consumer in the

United States who does not believe that if the NFL and Reebok really wanted to clean up the factory, it would be done quickly and correctly. If great athletes like Peyton Manning would speak out, it would have a tremendous impact."

Source URL (retrieved on *05/07/2015 - 02:36*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/salvadorans-paid-10-cents-sew-80-nfl-jerseys