

UNEMPLOYMENT: SOCIAL NEEDS AND ECONOMIC TENDENCIES. SCENARIOS FOR THEIR ETHICAL RECONCILIATION*

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“The right to work” is the first topic which the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences has taken up from the general brief to enter into a dialogue with the social teaching of the Church. It was chosen because of its centrality to the life of everyone, work being the means through which people realize themselves, becoming more human in the process (*Laborem Exercens* n. 9). As John Paul II reminded us at the beginning of the second Plenary Session (22 March 1996), devoted to ‘The Future of Work and Work in the Future’, the Academy’s aim is not to advance concrete socio-economic policies but to define the necessary social conditions which would offer the opportunity of personal fulfilment to all, in and through work.

After reviewing social teaching on labour, work and employment, (J. Schasching’s background paper) the Academy has begun by focusing on the crucially important topic of “unemployment” – selecting this because without work a high proportion of those throughout the world are denied dignity and self-realization, becoming socially marginal, and are a rising proportion of those in developing countries. The desirability of full employment was the starting point of our discussions whose ultimate objective is transcendently to define the conditions which would make it a real possibility.

The issue of full employment and the best way to approximate towards it entails the complete range of society’s institutions. Appreciation of this is of the utmost importance for it is precisely what has been neglected in many of the dominant approaches to the problem. In fact I would disengage three crucial implications from the need to take the full array of social institutions into account:

* Introduction to the 1999 Plenary Meeting.

(i) There can be no satisfactory approach to the problem of unemployment which is based upon a uni-factoral solution, that is one which envisages changes in a particular institution (most frequently in neo-liberalism it is the economy which is targeted) and does so without reference to its impact upon other social institutions.

(ii) Any such approach which is based upon transforming one institution fallaciously assumes that the institution in question is paradigmatic of all others and therefore that changes in one part of society will be automatically and harmoniously reflected by complementary transformations in the rest. Thus, underlying uni-factoral approaches are generic models of society which have generally been discredited, namely ones which assume organic institutional integration or which presume unwarranted homologies between vastly different social institutions (e.g. economy, polity, family, education etc.).

(iii) Any approach which is predicated upon institutional complementarity, such that the desired changes in one institution are presumed to have only felicitous consequences for others and therefore that no serious institutional conflicts will ensue, is equally erroneous. For it entails conservative assumptions that at most there will be transitional problems of adaptation or it involves traditional functionalist explanations of temporary dislocations which will disappear when 'cultural lags' are overcome.

Now I want to argue against all three assumptions – uni-factorality, homology and complementarity – and to maintain, in opposition to them, that there is a major divide between social needs and current economic tendencies which surfaces through the institutions in which they are respectively embedded and expressed. There are two levels at which this tension is manifested. (a) Firstly there is the level of 'actualism', which concerns those institutional incompatibilities which have surfaced as a matter of historical contingency but to which vested sectional interests have become attached (for example, the *positions prises* by advocates of labour deregulation on the one hand, and traditional Unionist defences of acquired rights to security of employment, on the other). Such 'actualism' seems to have the virtue of dealing with the existing institutional array and of explaining conflicts of interest in terms of the lack of goodness of fit between them. However, the drawback to an uncritical 'actualist' approach is that it confines us to the existing array of institutions and can only foresee solutions in terms of compromises and concessions taking place between them: it cannot envisage conflict or its transcendence in any other terms. (b) Secondly there is the level of real interests (i.e. what human beings by their nature require in order to flourish, as distinct from conditioned wants, demands or other

appetitive states), where these are seen as matters whose fulfilment is not conventionally married to the defence of existing institutional forms and can generally be envisaged as best being accommodated by new institutional structures. Thus whilst 'actualism' deals with traditional conflicts between historically emergent institutions which embody divergent vested interests, 'realism' considers the relationship between real social needs, anthropologically grounded in what we are, and the implications of various proposals to reduce unemployment and to create work opportunities.

Whilst 'actualism' is only contingently related (via pragmatism) to ethical considerations (since evaluation is confined to the competing legitimacy claims of clusters of institutions which have emerged historically, such as particular legal investment patterns or given systems of Social Security), realism broadens the ethical ground to consider the desirability of potential institutional arrangements, as it is linked to what is humanly needful rather than what is historically given.

What I seek to maintain in this introduction is that the work of the Academy in its previous two Plenary Sessions devoted to this theme has highlighted that there are four ineluctable contradictions between economic tendencies advanced as strategies to overcome unemployment, on the one hand, and conventional institutions defending social interests, on the other. By examining these four very schematically, I want to indicate the intransigence of these conflicts if considered solely at the level of 'actualism', i.e. that they are simply not resolvable by trade-offs between extant institutions. This is both an immanent critique of what is possible amongst existing institutional arrangements and also intended as a demonstration that any attempted institutional reconciliation at the actual level cannot satisfy the ethical requirement of introducing the universal right to work.

As an analysis it is intended to introduce the more radical approach to institutional innovation which needs serious consideration as the means of implementing work for all and thus meeting the ethical injunctions embedded in the Church's social teaching on work as a universal social need. Thus, presenting the four dimensions of contradiction is a way of recapitulating our work in 1996 and 1997 when the Academy largely confined its deliberations to the actualist level. Simultaneously, each dimension of irresolvable conflict is used to point the way to a discussion of more radical methods of transcendence by means of institutional transformations. Each of those pinpointed will constitute part of our discussions during this final Plenary Session on the theme of work and employment and is a response to the challenge of determining some of the conditions which would make work for all a real possibility.

The four contradictions in question are the following:

1. Free market development and deregulation of employment.
2. Finance markets and labour markets.
3. Globalization and local regulation.
4. Unemployment and social solidarity.

FOUR INSTITUTIONAL CONTRADICTIONS

1. *Free Market Development and the Deregulation of Employment*

Given the high correlation between rates of economic growth, which has maintained until recently, and rates of employment there is a strong tendency to (re)turn to (updated) conceptions of the free market as the mechanism whose 'hidden hand' will assure the best possible solution to problems of work and employment. As such its main tenets are minimalist state intervention and maximal deregulation of labour. Fundamentally, the argument is "to the effect that the market constitutes the paradigmatic social institution, and offers the privileged vantage point, in relation to which all other social institutions must be understood and assessed. It is this assumption which produces the conclusion – that whatever is worthwhile about democracy derives from the market, and whatever is threatening to the market can be traced to democracy" (Beetham p. 188).¹ This highlights the basic contradiction between the economic tendency which is currently widely promoted in neo-liberalism and the interests vested in two other social institutions – Trade Union organizations for collective bargaining and national systems of Social Security. Historically both of these emerged to offset the inegalitarian consequences of *laissez-faire* industrial development. Now advocates of neo-liberalism see the institutional conflict between economic growth and the vitality of such protective institutions as insuperable. Hence the conclusion, on the neo-liberal scenario, is that these acquired social rights must be dismantled as they act as fetters upon economic growth which generates employment.

This case hinges upon the free market as the motor of the relationship already noted between economic growth and full(er) employment. The argument itself merits considerable attention because the presentation of such an economy as the 'paradigmatic institution' has implications for other institutions which would have to be ethically endorsed if untrammelled

¹ David Beetham, 'Four Theorems about the Market and Democracy', *European Journal of Political Research*, 23, 1993, pp. 187-201.

market mechanisms are indeed central to generating the optimal scenario for full employment. Thus labour market rigidity is attributed to the accumulated body of law providing labour protection. Hence, protected employment (dismissal only for good cause, security of tenure, etc.) is held to discourage the creation of new jobs by employers, reluctant to extend such legal rights to a larger working population. Rigid employment protection increases the high cost of labour through collective bargaining (unions, it is held, having induced disproportionate increases in the wages of the less skilled) and through government intervention in the form of welfare benefits (as social security increases labour costs via higher taxation). The latter fails to stimulate production, as well, in the views of some, as introducing a "dependency culture" amongst workers.

The problem of unemployment, it follows, can only be rectified by the availability of more work and job creation follows economic growth in the absence of restrictions. In other words, the labour market needs to become more flexible and this is held to entail its deregulation, i.e. (i) a reduction of direct state intervention such that welfare payments are pegged below the level of low income employment (decreasing taxation which then becomes available for investment and increasing the incentive to take the employment available); (ii) measures be taken to ensure that pay settlements are not 'exceedingly' high, hence allowing pay differentials and thus work incentives to increase; and (iii) that greater geographical mobility be stimulated by loosening the ties to any given workplace.

In short, on the neo-liberal scenario the best protection for employees against arbitrary corporate action is not Unionization or regulation but full employment. The two are held to be increasingly in opposition to one another, because with the new international mobility of capital, aggressive wage bargaining merely drives investment abroad, and is thus counter-productive in outcome. Simultaneously, as far as the Unions are concerned, decreasing membership in developed countries (given quantitative and qualitative changes in employment) means that they consistently lose their traditional high ground as representatives of labour. Although an increasingly professionalized role is assumed by Unions in the intricacies of collective bargaining, meaning that institutional opposition continues, nevertheless this does not offer protection for the growing tracts of non-unionized employees, let alone the increasing numbers of the unemployed.

The other countervailing pressure which cushions against the rigours of free market forces is the welfare state. Yet Social Security systems are themselves threatened by a high rate of unemployment which leaves a diminishing active population to supply the needs of the young unemployed and the pensions of the old who now live longer. This is the second institutional

contradiction because there is a strong tendency in the liberal economic orthodoxy to see full employment and welfare state provisions as standing in a zero-sum relationship. High levels of unemployment have been met in post-war years by increased social security entitlements and state intervention for the preservation of jobs (e.g. especially in the mining industry). In the free market model, these are both deemed counter productive by (a) detracting from the investment income which would create new jobs elsewhere, (b) by inducing untaxed moonlighting among recipients of benefits and, (c) discouraging the more skilled from devoting more hours to the use of their productive expertise, due to the high tax levels their overtime would attract. The argument continues that the adaptive failure of labour markets now overloads the Welfare State and that governments react sensibly if they go down the path of retrenched benefits and deregulation policies.

However, there are two major problems raised by this course of action. On the one hand, deregulation at low wage levels when coupled with declining social security provisions is a formula for poverty. Added to this, prolonged unemployment on drastically reduced benefits affects not just the present population but entails inter-generational entrapment in poor nutrition, poor education, poor life chances in general; in short it projects unemployment into the next generation. On the other hand, the promise of the Welfare State was not simply as an economic safety-net, but was an essential plank in "social citizenship" (T.H. Marshall),² which would consolidate democracy by cutting across economic class divisions thus reinforcing social solidarity. Deprived of this role, the probabilities of social unrest then increase with attendant threats to democracy and the safety of life in civil society.

Yet it seems unlikely that there would be a wholesale dismantling of Social Security since advocates of the free market generally accede to the necessity of indispensable minimalist provisions. This is because a greater flexibility of labour (as desired) will automatically increase frictional unemployment and therefore *short-term* welfare support will be needed to protect against defaults on mortgage payments, etc. amongst the geographically mobile workers sought. Also it is generally accepted that state assistance will always be required for those whose unemployment derives from an *inability* to work. Moreover there is a stronger argument for an active welfare state in order to stimulate the growth of the service sector, thus generating new employment among the most needy category, the unskilled. Whilst economic orthodoxy holds that service sector growth which is

² T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge University Press, 1950).

dependent upon subsidization (government employment) is self-defeating because of the mounting fiscal crisis, the alternative view maintains that, on the contrary, such a boost to employment stimulates the use of out-servicing by dual-earning couples, thus simultaneously defraying the costs involved, avoiding poverty, providing care facilities (children, the aged and chronically sick), utilizing the skills of the 'unskilled' and also protecting the replacement of the active population, by helping to arrest demographic decline in developed countries.

As John Paul II underlined in his address (March 22, 1996), prosperity and economic growth cannot be realized to the detriment of persons and people. Liberalism, like any other economic system, thus commits a grave injustice if it benefits the possessors of capital whilst making workers mere instruments of production. Moreover in 1997 (April 25th), the Pope underlined the fact that market freedom must not counteract '*le droit primordial de tout homme à avoir un travail*'.

In this context there are three compelling reasons which invite consideration of radical means for transcending this conflict between existing economic tendencies and social needs. Firstly there is the fact of the growing distinction between the crisis in employment and the crisis in production such that today in the West upturns in production are frequently accompanied by downturns in employment. There is a basic difficulty in pinpointing the contribution of labour to current economic activity and this indeterminate input also spells an indeterminacy between productivity/profitability and the actual income distribution. Secondly, attempts to treat the labour contribution as homological by applying productivity indices to it seriously discounts the problem of their inappropriateness for certain socially necessary forms of employment (teachers, doctors, the police, magistrates, etc.), whilst contributing to the commodification of production workers. The "utility criterion" leads directly to an enlarged conception of "work" and "employment" which embraces tasks that are of benefit to fellow human beings, but which are not susceptible to measurement by profitability/productivity criteria. Thirdly, this introduces an ethical challenge to the index of market success, where it is queried whether the *type* of employment associated with profitability should ever be taken to be automatically beneficial in nature. After all profitability can be higher in drugs and arms production than any other area, but these clear cases where economic growth is detrimental to persons highlights the problematic nature of this index which is also associated with the promotion of consumerism and materialism.

Because the crisis in employment is unlikely to decline even given moderate increases in productivity and profitability since economic growth

is increasingly related to the contributions of information technology and decreasingly associated with employment rates or measurable work inputs, then free market growth is not a mechanism which can be relied upon as a motor driving towards full-employment or an income distribution based upon anything other than power relationships. Productivity now increases with a reduced number of workers and this is the millennial expectation for the whole of the Economic Union. In turn this will leave an growing proportion of potential workers in a structurally diminished bargaining position (given that the unemployed generally fall outside the aegis of Union negotiations) and yet would make the sources of remuneration for a necessarily enlarged population, active in inter-personal services rather than productive work (e.g. education and health care), extremely dubious on an economic scenario which includes reduced public spending as one of the fundamental tenets of neo-liberalism.

Hence the need to consider radical measures that would transcend the present conflict between social needs and current economic tendencies and which will be undertaken in this Plenary Meeting. In particular, serious consideration should be given to proposals for a 'Universal Basic Income' (*'allocation universelle'*), financed not by income tax but by taxing value/profit created by firms. This would simultaneously reduce the difficulties which attend the financing of existing systems of Social Security, would place all people in a better bargaining position with potential employers, and would supply the means for remunerating those engaged in socially useful activities which by their nature cannot be assigned a value by market mechanisms.

2. *Finance Markets and Labour Markets*

Pivotal to the dynamism attributed to the free market are the workings of capital finance markets on a global basis. Investment is enhanced as derivatives enable the design of a better risk profile for businesses. This in turn introduces a higher level of globalized economic stability by ironing out regional disturbances (e.g. famine due to localized crop failures can be overcome by the world-wide integration of agricultural markets). This dynamism derives from the fact that there is no unemployment/underemployment of capital, since on the worst financial scenario capital markets will settle for low pay, but never for no pay, in an explicit contrast with the labour market.

A major difference is therefore highlighted between the innovative power of financial markets in job creation and the rigidity of labour markets which depress it. This contrast is particularly marked in the differential internationalization of the two: high for capital and low for labour.

However, any advocacy of a homology between finance and labour markets is extremely contentious. It is certainly true that most national labour markets are far removed from the deregulation process characteristic of financial markets, but it does not follow that deregulation's main effect is to reduce unemployment rather than to increase profits. Nor does a *blanket* advocacy of deregulation prove compatible with a civilized let alone Christian society. What arises from this issue is the question of whether the labour market (people) should be modelled upon the finance market (things). Indeed can the analogy be used at all? Information can now be transferred in practically zero real time, but people cannot move as fast as information. Consequently labour markets *can never* be as flexible as finance markets, and this is not to mention issues of family dislocation and the devolved costs upon labour of re-location (e.g. language acquisition, loss of citizenship rights, disenfranchisement, etc.). This is the fundamental contradiction.

Moreover, the flight of capital is always more welcome than the international mobility of labour (witness the condition of "guestworkers" throughout Europe). Intensifying this contradiction is the fact that the mobility of labour, particularly when coming from Less Developed Countries rarely touches the poverty-stricken who cannot afford the price of moving and thus it often serves merely to depopulate some of the more skilled workers from the South to the further advantage of the North. In addition, restrictive employment policies in the North not only intensify the North-South divide, but also raise moral and social questions when 'guestworkers' (and to an even greater extent, refugees) are usually denied full civil rights in host countries. The problem here is to integrate the *person* of the worker, transforming them from the objects of employment to working subjects, possessing the rights of citizenship and enabled to live in their family unit. Respect for the *person* entails repudiating the cost-benefit approach to migration and accepting the obligation to accord rights of entry to the family – whose short-term results will undoubtedly constitute a diminution in cost-effectiveness. This is the price of the non-commodification of labour. Should social teaching not encourage the payment of this price?

Thus it is important to consider radical scenarios on which the interests of labour may well be served by tighter regulation of finance markets. There is now a growing advocacy of the need for an international system of finance market supervision to avoid abuses. Some of these are well documented (e.g. the impact on the national debt of less developed countries and the manner in which the free circulation of capital effectively augments unequal exchange with the Third World rather than necessarily performing its assumed boosting function). What seems required here is a closer speci-

fication of those abuses rebounding upon employment, wage levels and international inequality, together with the kind of measures which would curb these without destroying beneficial competition. Furthermore the ethical issue of dramatic increases in trading and profits which are largely detached from real economic processes and from production needs to be addressed in terms of the fiscal measures appropriate to such capital gains, especially since it is precisely the representatives of such interests who are most vocal in calling for labour deregulation – with its attendant unemployment effects on the young and the unskilled.

Here the radical scenario hinges upon making the admittedly difficult distinction between investment finance and speculative capital gains, one which has become increasingly blurred with various developments like trading in futures and the derivatives market. Nevertheless, this is not to say that certain operations of the international finance markets are not unambiguously speculative, as for example in foreign exchange dealings. Given that each such transaction is logged electronically at source, the infra-structure for direct fiscal extraction already exists. What is required on this scenario, which will be addressed during this Plenary Meeting, is the development of a superstructural and over-arching agency, because this finance market is one for which internal governmental initiatives cannot suffice. Such an agency is an implicit requirement of proposals such as the ‘Tobin tax’ and the UNO report³ which proposes taxing the international flow of speculative capital for the creation of a global social network to protect against poverty and hunger. In other words we need to consider a regulative body at world level to parallel the unregulated emergence of global speculation and to operate as an equitable redistributive mechanism which functions to offset the increasing capital divide between the developed and the developing worlds.

3. Globalization and Internal Regulation

The third contradiction surrounding employment stems from economic globalization, that is the emergence of a single interlinked market for the production and delivery of goods, services and finance across the world. Although labour is the fourth element in the globalized forces of production, the effects of economic tendencies are to make it the subordinate and dependent element. If the nineteenth-century history of the developed world is one where the gradual unionization of labour brought about some

³ UNO (1992), *World Report of Human*

equilibration with the powers of capital, then late twentieth-century globalization has effectively reinstated the original imbalance between them.

Currently there is a massive shift in the global balance of power characterizing labour and capital in favour of the latter, which is attributable to the international expansion of multi-national companies and their intentional undermining of the nineteenth-century balance achieved in the developed world. Thus capital concentration in the multi-nationals (which in 1994 were roughly estimated to control one third of global private property) yields them an unprecedented hegemony over the job market (since the majority of new employment in developed countries is now generated by them). As a corollary, their power is now to set different sectors of the global job market in competition with one another and thus to install a general weakening of organized labour on a world-wide basis.

Hence on the one hand, mobile capital moves expressly to those parts of the world where labour costs are cheapest and where labour's organization and acquired legal rights are also lowest. The impact upon less developed countries is thus to freeze labour organization at the lowest possible level in 'exchange' for capital investment. Yet this non-reciprocal process does not even come with any promise of continued investment, since shifts in currency values mean that investment patterns track the lowest labour costs on a world-wide basis. Thus migratory capital systematically deserts existing locations in the interest of operating with the smallest wage bill. Because of the explicit avoidance of areas with any significant trend towards labour organization, those countries which are sequentially deserted are left with no institutional basis for defending workers who are now vulnerable to whatever it is that political forces attempt to do in the face of the local economic crises which they now confront.

On the other hand and simultaneously, the price of continued investment in developed countries is the intensified demand of capital for the progressive deregulation of the labour market and erosion of provisions for job security. In this way, developed and underdeveloped countries are effectively pitted against one another in a competition to reduce labour costs and to generate the type of deregulated labour market which is most conducive to the extraction of profit by multi-national investors.

The broad notion that global well-being is best promoted by a completely flexible world labour market which becomes homological to investment markets is predominantly ideological. Not only, as I have already argued, can people not display the same mobility as capital without incurring considerable costs of dislocation, but there are further social barriers to the neo-liberal ideal of a global labour market. Enduring racism in the West places severe limits on workers' mobility and social discrimination

generates undesirable consequences when it does occur, one of the most deleterious being the emergence of urban ghettos due to the workings of housing markets, which have knock-on effects for other social institutions, the most important being education which then largely reproduces the differential life-chances of different groups entering the system.

The contradiction occurs because few initiatives taken at the level of national policy are capable of counteracting the impact of multi-national companies, whose annual turnover now exceeds the national budget of the smaller European countries. Hence the paradox that although the right to work is a standard feature of some 160 national constitutions, yet global conditions are now more hostile than ever to the effective realization of full employment by measures taken at the level of nation states. Moreover, since investment patterns and the export of profits continue to reflect the contingencies of historical development and thus to protract the effects of neo-colonialism, the global consequence is a widening of the economic gulf between North and South which is particularly impervious to political action on the part of poorer governments.

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) witnessed an acknowledgement of this global economic tendency both to generate wealth in absolute terms whilst simultaneously deepening the global divide between rich and poor nations and to increase the prosperity of some whilst exacerbating social disintegration in others. Yet the doubt remains whether it lies within the abilities of most developed countries to transcend the contradiction between untrammelled patterns of multi-national investment and the social needs which have no commensurate promotive agencies. Significantly the public debate surrounding G-8 policies has centred upon debt remission towards the twenty or so countries most negatively affected – something which, whilst desirable in itself, would do nothing structurally to preclude the immediate recurrence of indebtedness.

More radical proposals go beyond reliance upon the concerted goodwill of the most powerful national economies. A cause for cautious optimism is found by many in legal institutions which already transcend national borders. However, when such nascent developments are inspected, then neither the Economic Union nor the International Court of Human Rights have yet seriously begun to codify multi-national malpractice. Instead the suggestion is to build beyond the economic confines of current international agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund, by advocating an '*order démocratique planétaire*' (John Paul II, April 26th, 1997). Its concomitant institutions would be dedicated to the counter advancement of social interests which require representation and legislation without which they will remain in a state of glaring non-complementarity with the effects

of global economic operations. As was stressed in *Centesimus Annus* (n. 58), countervailing institutions are needed at the global level to ensure that '*les intérêts de la grande famille humaine soient équitablement représentés*'. As part of the general task of our Academy is to dialogue with the social teachings of the Church, it seems to me to be crucially important to signal those points, like the above, where our deliberations are in direct accord with the established corpus.

4. *Unemployment and Social Solidarity*

Unemployment constitutes a problem on a world-wide basis and one which has intensified since the 1970s in the West. For OECD countries, which largely succeeded in delivering full employment during the 25 years of post-war reconstruction, joblessness then increased with successive crises in the world economy in the 1970s (for OECD countries, unemployment increased from 10 million during 1950-73, to 30 million in 1983 and stood at 25 million in 1990). This high rate of unemployment, which peaked at 8.5% of the workforce, meant, for example, that a quarter of those under the age of 25 have never worked in some European countries. In Eastern Europe 'full employment' evaporated in the 1990s with the suppression of latent posts (formal and fictitious jobs), the closing of state enterprises and a disadvantageous export situation. In the Third World, although there is a strong relationship between the level of GNP, of waged employment and of standards of living with integration into the world economy (especially in Asia), unemployment rises due to national debt depressing the capacity to create work, certain declines in demand for raw materials (ironically due to Western re-cycling) and I.T. transfers which diminish labour intensiveness. Unemployment is reinforced by the strong general tendency for the growth of the active population to outstrip the possibilities of employment outside the primary sector (which now often furnishes diminishing levels of subsistence). In short the problem of unemployment is increasingly evident on a world-wide basis.

What this means is a contradiction between patterns of (un)employment and the social integration of large and important sections of the population. Since unemployment has been disproportionately concentrated in two major categories, the young and the unskilled, the contradiction with social integration entails the threat of a marginalized 'underclass' and the projection of disadvantage as an inter-generational phenomenon. What augments this undermining of social solidarity is discontent deriving from the relative underemployment of women in the workplace (through traditional patterns of discrimination together with enduring problems of maternity

leave and child-care), in conjunction with lasting overemployment of working women in domestic tasks within the home.

Since work contributes to the fulfilment of each person, by literally increasing their humanity, then the voluntaristic entry of women into employment should be welcomed, rather than regretting the demise of the female "domestic model". After all that model had only been characteristic of the more privileged sectors of developed societies for a relatively short historical period. Obviously this raises questions about the discharge of family responsibilities (particularly towards children and the aged), but it is *not* one which can be answered by concentrating exclusively upon *female* roles. A corollary of increased female participation (given the demographic tendency for the majority of women to marry) is that at the family level we are increasingly dealing with dual-income units in the developed world and with dual-worker units in the less developed. Given that this 'new' model appears to be here to stay, consideration has to be given to parallel changes in family requirements such as child-care and care for the aged.

In this context, job-sharing or partial working has been advanced to offset the marginalization of the unemployed, representing a solution to the problem of social solidarity which would also be highly compatible with women's needs to combine child bearing and occupational continuity. Fostering the trend towards a shorter working week could significantly alleviate medium term unemployment without negative consequences for productivity by dissociating the time during which the company operates (say a six day week) from the working week of employees (say four days). Such proposals have encountered at best a lukewarm reception in business circles because they are held to increase unit labour costs and thus are considered as inimical to economic recovery and growth.

A more radical solution to the problem of how to extend work to all, in the interests of both individual human fulfilment and also of social integration, would consist in a reconceptualization of the terms 'labour', 'work', and 'employment', together with the relations between them. It is often assumed that it is predominantly in traditional societies that 'labour' and 'work' (usually of subsistence nature and outside the monetary economy) are unconnected to employment (i.e. remuneration for holding a post). Equally 'employment', it is often forgotten, has certainly from the modern period often been completely dissociated from either 'labour' or 'work'. Not only are there late modernist equivalents of sinecure offices but increasingly less and less of the active employed population has even a distanced relation to production. Therefore after 200 years of privileging what is assumed to be productive employment, changed circumstances make it appropriate to consider redefining 'work and employment', such that the

emphasis is placed on the recognition and extension of 'work' rather than upon a fixed quantum of 'employment'.

The question is how to effect a real change such that proper recognition is given to those who make a contribution to society through 'work' rather than 'employment'. The types of work in mind are predominantly those falling into the category of caring (children, the aged, the homeless, migrants, the environment, etc.). This neither is, nor need become, professionalized. Indeed one of the significant factors about it is that it utilises 'skills' which people already possess or for which they require little additional training. Therefore to revalorize their contribution would have most impact upon the category registering the highest rates of unemployment, the so-called 'unskilled'. Simultaneously it would facilitate women's labour market integration by providing them with family services. The question remains of how this should be paid for. Fiscal benefits and welfare payments would arouse the familiar objections about increased tax burdens in relation to economic growth.

However, were a much more social and less economic notion of *radical flexibility* of the labour market to be entertained, then the sums can add up very differently. A radical notion of flexibility breaks both with the fixed distinction between 'work and employment' and equally with the outdated pre-war model of entry to the labour market dating from 'apprenticeship' and being continuous until 'retirement'. Existing changes include frequent moves to different employers and work sites, the increase of 'homeworking' which some see as heralding the 'virtual workplace', more self-employment and more contingent employment (part-time, limited contracts, cumulation of partial jobs, etc.). What would be acknowledged is a new concept of the division of labour, which is already coming into being, yet needs recognizing not just as a sporadic phenomenon confined to certain categories but as a generic life-cycle approach to conceptualizing the labour market. In other words the *majority* of people could be seen as shifting between 'work' and 'employment' (to use the traditional terms) at different points in the family life-cycle and in response to shifting preferences and economic circumstances. It would include some training of the unemployed for neglected social tasks but would be much more generalized (and gender unspecific) given the decline of factory-based production and the declining division between workplace and living-space.

To build upon this for all would not only preclude this from becoming a stigmatized sector for the less qualified, but would valorize voluntary work amongst the qualified and enable values other than unbridled careerism to be expressed throughout the life course. Simultaneously it could significantly contribute to the problem presented by our top heavy demographic

structures in developed countries. Here the pension bill escalates given the tendency towards earlier ages of retirement, with the old becoming the greatest consumers of welfare services and the least of market services. Yet the whole concept of retirement, applied to a younger age group who also live longer and more healthily, harks back to the "industrial society model". Now 30 years of 'leisure' is an intolerable burden to many who cannot fill each day but instead still need to make a valued social contribution.

Rather than become a reserve army of the post-employed, entry into voluntary work could be a normative expectation. This would increase the quality of auxiliary services (in schools, hospitals, prisons) where employed staff are too overstretched to supply the quality services needed. Here a basic level of remuneration could substitute for pensions amongst a category of the population whose peak expenditure period is over. Since continued 'work' would be time consuming it could reasonably be expected to boost use of market services amongst what would become a less leisured retired group. Modalities and costings would require close scrutiny, but the real key would lie in generalizing the normative expectation of making a continued social contribution. In turn this would facilitate the re-orientation of welfare state expenditure towards the skilling of the young and young unemployed adults.

To make the normative expectation of working central and universal is something which can be conditioned but not determined by structural adjustments in material elements like taxation and benefits, at least in the developed world. But the core inducement has to be the fulfilment derived from the experience of work itself. This brings us to the last section of papers to be presented during the Plenary Meeting, which are devoted to the spiritual dimension of employment and how this can be incorporated into a new culture of work despite the increasing fragmentation, isolation and personalization of employment. It introduces a final contradiction between the fragmentation of individualized work experience and the normative universalism of a theology (or even soterology) of experiencing work. This perhaps presents the greatest challenge of all to the task which the Academy has undertaken.