

Summary of the Discussion

This paper was considered very helpful in its suggestions for developing Social Teaching and the socio-economic changes which need consideration.

The presentation brought out the crucial distinction between the right to existence and the right to work. This is pressing because a recent pastoral letter from the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany foresaw the achievement of such a high level of productivity that no additional labour would be required and a leisured population could be sustained by means of fixed pensions/allocations. The paper presented indicated that unfortunately the encyclicals have always associated the right to work too closely with the right to subsistence. From a formal legal viewpoint, the right to work has not been articulated with sufficient clarity in the encyclicals.

If we take the priority of labour over capital seriously, then we also have to seek a new economic order which is not based on the principle of capital. Currently so much emphasis is placed on GNP that the human being is forgotten. Thus, Catholic Social Teaching has the task of re-conceptualizing the right to work and the distribution of employment on the basis of a new definition of growth, which recognizes that not only does capital have its limits but so too do human beings.

The paper furnished a valuable contribution to interpreting changes in employment in less developed countries. Generally, unemployment is presented in coldly economic terms, from the capitalist point of view, but it also contributes to growing "subversive movements", especially in Latin America. Such guerilla movements, challenging established institutions have a subjective aspect, but objective factors also fuel their emergence. Situations are subversive as well as people. In the absence of an adequate social infrastructure and of democratic institutions, unemployment and dependency also precipitate intellectuals towards subversive direct action.

The significance of globalization (associated with global markets and the spread of information technology) must be underlined, because it has

taken place indiscriminately and not gradualistically. The consequences have been increased unemployment for large contingents of workers, due to automation in conjunction with the privatization of state enterprises. Particularly in developing countries such privatization has recently led to the recognition of the state as a necessary evil; indispensable, but evil in its role as a bad employer, bad and corrupt administrator. The ghost of corruption, hinted at in *Rerum novarum*, is now stalking the world.

It is indeed essential to stress that globalization constitutes one lacuna in existing social teaching, because it signals a reversal of a previous trend. Throughout industrialization and into this century, the value of labour in the developed world has been increasing. This trend is now moving to a rapid end. In the future those national economies with the lowest labour costs will generally win out in global contests, resulting in a shift in work from developed to the developing world, which seems inevitable.

A second lacuna in social teaching concerns the significance of leisure, of changed attitudes towards it compared with work, and how people have to be educated for it as much as for employment, to make their self-development worthwhile.

References to *Laborem exercens* mentioned that it had not dealt with the *general* problem of unemployment. However, it provided a fundamental starting point for discussion of how to resolve this problem which concerned the structure of the economic system. Jean-Paul II wrote not only of the primacy of labour over capital but also of the “common property of the means of production”. The latter seems to have been forgotten, although it is a central point in the encyclical. The primacy of labour cannot be achieved without common property and participation in economic decision-making. This fundamental point in the encyclical has not been developed, but it is important to integrate the discussion of unemployment with a consideration of changes in the capitalist system.

Reply by Jean-Yves Calvez

It is true that earlier encyclicals have raised the issue of unemployment. *Centesimus annus* for its part contains images of the ideal modern enterprise, where work is fully valued and personal abilities are well utilized and add that the majority of people are excluded from such employment. Clearly this was an allusion to the Third World, but one which then became relevant within the developed world as well.

Thus reference has indeed been made to the problem of unemployment in the recent teachings of the Pope and the Church in general. However, these have not been accompanied by a stronger (anthropological) justification for why so much importance is attached to combating unemployment. This is because such justifications are challenged by those advocating a “universal allocation”, such as Jean-Marc Ferry, and this new train of thought merits consideration.

Clearly notions of common property, participation, etc. challenge the structures of capitalist society, but they entail a rather different question in so far as they are predicated upon the availability of work for (almost) everyone. Again, it is clear that the Church has endorsed the right to work. However its declaration is made in very *general* terms. Given the magnitude of unemployment at this time, it would be necessary to attempt more precision, by specifying on which fronts, by what types of approaches and through what kinds of (research-based) concrete recommendations it could be realized.

Next, what has been termed “subversion” may not be fully justified, but it is based in complex social circumstances among which the total absence of work for many plays an absolutely central role, and one to which governments have not been significantly attentive.

In conclusion, the fact that our discussions touched upon leisure, the economy and the just wage, means that we are no longer conveying the impression that the Church only considers people in their capacity as workers.