

## **Section One**

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# **WHAT ARE THE ISSUES REGARDING WORK FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?**

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Stories like the following abound in our society today.

### **My Journey through Unemployment — A Personal Reflection**

Perhaps you know an 'unemployed' person, or maybe you've even experienced unemployment for some period of time.

As the rate of unemployment increases and the recession gets worse, perhaps you too may be caught off guard if you find there are no jobs for you, even after you have completed your tertiary qualifications. Perhaps however, you aren't that worried by such a prospect. Maybe you think your faith is so strong that nothing could diminish or threaten your happiness — least of all being unemployed! But it's interesting that the writer of Ecclesiastes advocated six times that 'A man (person) can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his (or her) work' (2:24). To this the writer related 'enjoyment . . . wisdom, knowledge and happiness' (2:25,26). This is not to say that these benefits can only be found through work, but they seem to be connected to having a regular job to do.

While unemployed, I have felt an emptiness and lack of fulfilment that pervades my daily life. I must face the reality of being without a regular job. Little things reinforce my social lack of identity — 'So, what do you do?', strangers often ask. Old friends reiterate the same question: 'So, what are you doing these days?' (One well-meaning friend even suggested that I resign myself to being a 'wife' at the conclusion of the year, and not let the situation upset me!!). But I am my toughest critic as I face myself each day as an 'unemployed' person. 'Who are you?!' I inadvertently ask myself, as I frantically attempt to become involved in life. Many days are spent looking for jobs, thinking of where to look next, or doing volunteer and relief work in schools, child-care centres or after-school care centres. Believe me, I have tried everywhere and everything to be 'employed' and even just to keep busy. It takes all my imagination to think of new strategies. There are times which arise when I actively have to force myself to keep contacting employers (who consistently reply with 'refusal letters'), and times when I am so disheartened about the situation that I lose hope of ever finding a job.

(Here Anne listed 141 separate individuals personally contacted regarding teaching work, plus other responses to advertisements etc in 13 other categories of employment.)

My situation has been further limited by my teaching qualifications and a preference to finding a teaching position. I have needed to remain flexible enough in my daily plan to be able to cancel everything should I get the occasional call at 6.30 - 8.30 am for Temporary Relief Teaching work! (It's interesting that Social Security prohibits a prospective employee from having a preference for finding work in the profession they are qualified in). My

definite plans for the week have thus had to be made for night hours: tutoring, share group, band practice, etc.

To make matters more complicated, I had my car stolen at the beginning of the year and am still paying for damages which resulted. (Without my car I can't even do temporary relief teaching work!) So it hasn't just been the personal lack of fulfilment and continual knockbacks from employers which has been challenging, but the financial side of things. Perhaps being a student all those years beforehand has helped me accept this financial limitedness! Although, at least as a student I always felt I had work to do each day.

Consolation has not been easy to find, even through the limited amount of Christian literature available. I recently opened a book called 'Living with Unemployment' by Ann Warren which only left me feeling more depressed. Although it made some interesting comments about how men react to unemployment, there was only one situation referred to which involved a woman who was unemployed. It continually implied that most men are deeply affected when they experience unemployment, but women were hardly mentioned in relation to a career of their own. This had no relevance to a woman who is suffering from unemployment.

Within the community in general I have found that people usually don't know how to respond to an unemployed person without emphasising their lack of employment even more. Worst of all, I have found that it is unacceptable to show any sign of depression — however subtle — because this, too, makes people feel nervous. In our Western society we mustn't feel sorry for ourselves or we're considered 'wimps'. To contradict this emphasis, our identity in society centres around the work we do. So the overriding message is that the unemployed mustn't indulge in any form of grief although we're a 'useless burden' draining the taxpayers of their money! (This attitude, thankfully, doesn't affect the people who have shown genuine concern for me as a person.) I'm glad that God accepts me despite my lack of social standing. He doesn't see me as a nothing, even though I'm unemployed. It doesn't even depend on what a wonderful Christian I can be — although he still wants me to love, honour and glorify him in my daily life. Romans 8 seems to confirm that in all kinds of hardship, nothing 'will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (v. 39). With this in mind, I can be free to be myself and to acknowledge that pain in this life, because my hope is not in what is seen but what is unseen. My identity isn't totally dependent on what I do but fundamentally on what God has done through Christ. Furthermore, although the pain of this life is real, reality also extends beyond this pain to include perfect unconditional love, joy and peace in Christ.

This may sound rather clichéd, but I'm beginning to realise more and more through my unemployment that I can do literally nothing to attain perfection simply on my own merits. This year has been one of the toughest (although not the toughest) years of my life, but I am finally beginning to face my inadequacies more and accepting myself as an imperfect human being, who must rely on God for everlasting, complete fulfilment. Yes, I have the ability to think for myself — but even this is ultimately futile if I use this ability to try to attain perfection.

Even being reminded again and again in church of the grace of God has not had the same impact as actually experiencing the extremes of my own limitedness, and comparing it to God's completeness and unlimitedness. It remains a mystery why God would send ' . . . him who had no sin to be sin for us' (2 Cor 5:21) when we 'were like sheep going astray' (1 Peter 2:24). But in receiving eternal life and all the other blessings God gives us, I acknowledge the fact that he loves me personally and has accepted me as a perfect human being because of what Christ did on the cross. This suffering has taught me more than all the super-spiritual experiences I would have hoped for!

*The Rev. Donald W Baron, in his article 'A walking civil war' (1978) suggests that for many, 'the Christian life is purported to be one of peaches and cream. All is joy, victory, glory, . . . never a tear or a worry. . . In the meantime God allows us to experience low points of life, to teach us lessons we could not learn any other way. He teaches us to trust him when there is no ground for trusting other than the word he has given. He teaches us to see more clearly the depth of our fallenness, so that we may see more clearly the heights of his grace. In this way, he enables us to identify with those to whom we witness, so that we do not talk down to them, but stand beside them, like beggars telling other beggars where to find bread.'*

(Reprinted from the SA Chaplains' Newsletter, 'Grapevine' with their permission.)

## **1.1 UNEMPLOYMENT**

Already from this one life story, we come face to face with some of the broader issues related to work and unemployment, and it is not difficult to determine that the implications of being without work are far-reaching for both individuals and society.

Many have likened how they feel when unemployed to the grief process:

- \* After the initial shock there comes a short but optimistic period. For the unemployed person there is the belief that they are not responsible for their predicament, and this is accompanied by high hopes of securing employment.
- \* The second stage is more pessimistic, with feelings of anger and hostility mixed with doubt, guilt, and vulnerability, and suspicion that they are responsible for their own lack of work.
- \* The third stage is one of fatalism, that unemployment is inevitable. At this time apathy and alienation, feelings of 'them' and 'us', are experienced.

Unemployed people do not live in a vacuum, and consequently attitudes of individuals and society in general play an important role in shaping their experience.

'Unemployment' is generally recognised as a major social issue of our society. However, the range of attitudes within that varies considerably:

- \* Some people are apathetic and immune to it as an issue.
- \* Others passively accept unemployment; what is tolerated by society then becomes tolerable.

- \* Some people regard it as a necessary and unavoidable condition of modern industrial society.
- \* Other people, while recognising the issue, see it as intractable.
- \* Some people are concerned that it denies equality and justice, and demand solutions.

Attitudes towards unemployment as a general issue can be distinguished from attitudes towards unemployed people as a social group. Attitudes towards unemployed individuals are often ambivalent, combining sympathy with hostility. Interview type surveys and media coverage tend to focus on the symptoms and behaviour of the unemployed person, and characteristics such as lack of motivation are often mistaken as causes of unemployment. Schemes are frequently directed to the unemployed individuals to improve their skills and their ability to obtain employment. This affects the self-esteem and identity in society of individuals and alienates them from their peers and social groups. There is then the tendency to personalise unemployment as an experience affecting only the unemployed person rather than the wider society. Evidence on social consequences is still patchy and incomplete. Surveys have shown that society is less sympathetic to unemployed people than to other social security claimants, and that the attitudes of family, relations and friends become increasingly hostile over time.

The causes of unemployment are many and varied. There is also divergence of opinion as to the weighting or emphasis to be given to the various possible causes. It helps to understand the causes of unemployment by classifying them into different types.

These classifications are as follows:

- a) **Cyclical unemployment** is that caused by the ups and downs of the business cycle, ie a deficiency in what economists call the level of aggregate demand. The level of aggregate demand is able to be regulated by governments via various policy measures which themselves fall into two main categories. The first is known as fiscal policy; for example, direct government spending, taxation measures, direct measures to control the level of imports and exports. The second is known as monetary policy: all those measures which use variations in the money supply and hence the interest rate to affect the level of aggregate demand.

There is no consensus among economists and political parties as to which is the best measure to regulate demand, but the empirical evidence does suggest that the further a nation moves from full employment, the more powerful is fiscal policy and less powerful is monetary policy, and the reverse is true the closer a nation moves towards full employment.

- b) **Structural unemployment** is that which results from a change in the structure of industry in the economy. It results in people being unemployed either through having redundant skills or in being slow to shift into those areas where there are employment opportunities.

Structural unemployment is often the price of human inventiveness and the attendant technological change. The classic example is the skills of the blacksmith being made redundant with the introduction of the motor vehicle.

- c) **Seasonal unemployment** occurs because some types of labour are only employed during certain seasons, eg fruitpickers, canecutters.
- d) **Frictional unemployment** results from there being too much labour in the wrong place or with the wrong skills. This creates a friction, impeding the smooth operation of the economic order. It is a localised type of unemployment.
- e) **'Unemployable people'** refers to the existence of a group of people who are sometimes viewed by society as never being employable. It refers to those people with characteristics such as chronic mental, physical or emotional handicaps, who have not been considered productive enough to be employed.
- f) **Voluntary unemployment** refers to those people who, for various reasons, choose not to work.
- g) **Hidden unemployment** is that which exists but is not reflected in official statistics and is often ignored as a situation of unemployment. It includes people in a number of different circumstances who are not now in the labour force, but who would be if the conditions were nearer to full employment, eg
  - \* people in part-time work, but who would like or prefer to be working full-time;
  - \* women at home and not registered in the recognised work force;
  - \* students returning to repeat or continue schooling because work is not available;
  - \* employees not dismissed when employers need to reduce labour input, but who have work contribution reduced through cutting of overtime, or reduced-hours working week, or reduction to part-time work.

Causes of unemployment vary from time to time and in different countries and regions. Regardless of the causes of unemployment, a serious unemployment problem warrants action.

Rising unemployment is a widespread international problem in industrial societies. While there is much transitional unemployment, there is an increase in the number of people who are unemployed for a very long time.

Social and economic analysis has shown that the impact of unemployment, in terms of particular groups of the population who are unemployed and their length of unemployment, is greatest for young people (particularly those without qualifications or additional skills beyond those gained through secondary education), migrants, older men (particularly from lower-skilled occupations, and those who have been retrenched or made redundant), women and girls, and Aboriginal people.

The material and psychological effects of unemployment and the relationship with poverty, poor health, homelessness, low self-esteem, depression,

pessimism, family traumas, crime and delinquency, have been documented and accepted as major social problems in our society. Unemployment and poverty as the obverse of work and wealth, raise some of the most significant social justice issues faced by modern society. The LCA Statement on Poverty discusses these issues in more detail.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lutheran Church of Australia, *Statement on Poverty*, first draft.

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. Reread quotation from Rev D W Baron, and Section 3, paras 3.b.10 and 3.c.8 - 3.c.14.
2. Discuss our Christian need for real solidarity with the unemployed.
3. How can we as Christian individuals help console and encourage the unemployed people we know and meet?
4. An unemployed person, like Anne, has much to teach Christians who are employed and have grown to rely on their own strengths and abilities. How can the LCA utilise its unemployed members' experiences for the benefit of all?
5. How does our Lutheran sense of 'call' or 'vocation' limit, or expand, people's employment possibilities? (see 3.d.1 - 3.d.3).
6. Should unemployed people have to do 'anything' just to 'get a job'? (ie change what they believe is their God-given calling in a particular career) (3.d.4 - 3.d.7).
7. 'God leads us into precisely those situations that will stimulate and tempt our old man (person) to sin. He does this in order to set us free from sin' (P Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*).

Discuss in relation to secure employment and unemployment.

#### **Resources for Further Study**

ABC, Four Corners Special Program on Unemployment, Sept 1992.

Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Action on Unemployment*, a workshop kit, Melbourne, 1992.

Dixon, A, *Unemployment: The Social and Economic Cost*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, 1992.

Larwill, Kirsten, *Unemployed Australia, a resource book*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne, 1992.

## 1.2 YOUTH<sup>4</sup>

*It ought to be possible, in a country like this, for everyone with a willing pair of hands to be always employed, and at good wages. There should be constant openings for our young with brains and ability to make good incomes; poverty and enforced idleness should be unknown.*

(Banjo Patterson, 1888).

Adolescence is a time of activity, of energy and restlessness. Lennings<sup>5</sup> argues that youth attitudes to work and unemployment have been placed within an adult work-value framework. He argues that adolescence is a developmental stage and that the values and attitudes of young people should be examined in this context.

*Developmental theories stress the importance of adolescence as the period in which the organising and structuring of time and independent forays into the social world is at its most crucial. Therefore it could be argued that the experience of work or substitutes for work is at its most critical during this period for future integration with society.*<sup>6</sup>

Young people have always been economically vulnerable. During the full employment days of the 1950s teenagers were nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as adults. However, unemployment became a problem only in the mid 1970s. The first sign was the 1974 teenage unemployment rate of 5.8%. By 1981, unemployment reached 13.9% and the 1982-83 recession pushed it to 22.6%. Young people are the major single victims of the current recession. The unemployment for 15-19 year olds in Australia in December 1991 was 26%, with some 120 000 young Australians looking for work.

Increasing unemployment has coincided with a decline in the number of full-time jobs held by teenagers. 112 000 full-time teenage jobs were eliminated between April 1990 and April 1991.

Many young people have responded by 'seeking refuge in the education system', with school retention rates increasing dramatically over the last decade. While this is generally seen as an achievement, the policy of school retention has been criticised as a means of hiding the true level of unemployment by delaying young people's entry into the labour market.

*There is an increase in students returning to school to repeat their final year in order to get a better score to get into the course or work they want.*<sup>7</sup>

Another dimension to the decline in young people's employment is the replacement of unionised full-time jobs, some of which offered career paths, a combination of casual, part-time and dead-end full-time jobs, with no clear path for career development.

Every time, for example, an unemployed South Australian attends an interview he or she is competing with an average of 30 people, and the response rate for some jobs advertised in newspapers is often more than 900 inquiries.

In some families we are now seeing third generation unemployment, where young people have no role models for employment and become part of a cycle of hopelessness.

Of all the problems facing youth — sex, drugs, alcohol, popularity, parents, school and teachers — finding a job is the issue which concerns them most. The closer students come to completing their schooling, the more negative and uncertain they become about their future. In a study which surveyed 2500 students, 70% were worried about finding a job, while just 15% listed sex a concern, 10% drugs and alcohol, and fewer than 10% violence.

The debate about unemployment has concentrated on the allegedly prohibitive cost of reducing it. Little attention is given though to the price the community pays for accepting unemployment. High rates of unemployment have been consistently linked to increases in crime, suicide, ill-health, homelessness, and poverty. These problems are directly experienced by an 'underclass' of people trapped in poverty and unemployment, but the whole society pays a price in medical expenses, property damage, law enforcement and the undermining of social cohesion. It is difficult to measure the exact cost of unemployment, but evidence suggests it runs into billions of dollars every year.<sup>8</sup>

While in one sense youth unemployment is a personal problem of the unemployed individual, from another point of view it is a community problem. Large numbers of our young people want to work and are unable to do so. We have an employment problem. We need a vision for our country which indicates a belief in, and support of, our young people and the future.

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- 4 Statistics and information obtained from the following sources:  
Winderlich, David, *Surplus to Requirements - Youth Unemployment: A Strategic Approach to Employment and Vocational Training*, Youth Affairs Council of SA, 1991.  
White paper on unemployment, Fusion Aust, 1985.  
*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, various articles.  
Pisarski, Adrian, *Statistics disguise apathy shown towards youth unemployment*.  
Australian Social Welfare Impact, Dec 1991.
- 5 Lennings, C J, 'Work Values, Unemployment and the Developmental Context', *The Bulletin of the National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies*, Vol. 7, No 3, August 1982, p 28.
- 6 Ibid, p 29.
- 7 *The Advertiser*, 17 Feb 1992, p 3.
- 8 Ekersley, Richard, *Casualties of Change: the Predicament of Youth in Australia*.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. Our Australian society is often perceived as youth orientated, but more often than not, our youth are the first group to be exploited. In what ways can our society show its youth that they are needed and valued members in this recession?
2. What effect will long-term and high youth unemployment have on our community and its future?
3. Is the current economic system producing a 'mendicant' attitude?  
If so, what impact will this have on future generations?
4. Many of our young people are denied a secure job, even after years of 'extra' education which has constantly promised a bright future in a career which matches their qualifications. How can we help to restore hope to those who no longer dare to dream?  
Is the church's real promise of hope being effectively and meaningfully conveyed to youth?

5. 'The young people of today, don't appreciate what they've got: constant handouts from the government, good schools . . . everything at their fingertips and they're still not happy!' What causes such unhappiness amid so many blessings?
6. "'If a man will not work, neither shall he eat.'" That's what the Bible teaches and that's what I've always lived by. I've never been afraid of a bit of hard work, but this younger generation has it all too easy. Spoilt, lazy, good-for-nothing dole bludgers! They expect everything to fall into their laps, out of MY pocket!  
  
What prejudices are expressed here?
7. How do we help people to move beyond the 'Protestant work ethic' and empathise with the young people who are striving to get a job?  
  
(See Section 3, 3.c.8 - 3.c.10, and 3.d.8)

### **Resources for Further Study**

Blakers, Catherine: *Youth and Society: the two transitions: a review of Australian research on young people in work and education*, ACER Research Monograph, no 3. 1990, Victoria

## **1.3 THE RURAL SECTOR**

The Lutheran Church of Australia recently issued a statement on the rural crisis subtitled 'An Assault on the Dignity of Agricultural Work' (available from the secretary of the Commission). This points out that the current crisis in the agricultural sector is due to a number of causes, including:

- \* the role of banks and their lending policies;
- \* high interest rates;
- \* subsidy policies in the USA and Europe;
- \* fall in prices for agricultural products;

and is not solely due to droughts or mismanagement.

Unemployment and related problems in the rural sector have an impact not only on individual farmers, but also on their family, whole rural communities, and the community at large, which relies on agricultural products for their daily sustenance.

Some of the personal consequences of this crisis are unemployment, bankruptcy, family breakdown, mental health problems, and even suicide among people in the rural sector.

The problems seem overwhelming, but there is hope to be found, both for the struggling farmer within his rural community and for the Australian community at large. *We are Hanging on: Voices of Hope in the Rural Crisis* (ed John Pfitzner, Feb 1992) offers some sound practical advice on coping with both the social and economic dimensions of the crisis.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. Should the efficiency of rural production be the only goal, at the expense of farming families and communities?
2. How can Christians influence the policies of governments and large corporations which are unjustly having a negative impact on the rural sector?
3. What will be the long-term impact on the rural sector, and on our community as a whole, if the current situation continues?
4. A population loss continues in rural communities, and as people leave, so too do vital community services and facilities. What can be done to ensure that farming communities, in this time of crisis, are not isolated even further?
5. How can we assist our fellow Christians in rural areas to live through the current crisis? (Some helpful suggestions in *We are Hanging On* NB. pp 66-67, 82-84.)
6. Crisis times are often referred to as 'times for evaluation'. How can rural Christians make that evaluation a positive one?

### **Resources for Further Study**

Pfitzner, John (ed), *We are Hanging on: Voices of Hope in the Rural Crisis*, Feb 1992, Lutheran Publishing House.

'Women in Agriculture' - Victorian Mallee Group, *Coping with stress in our country communities*, Department Community Services, Canberra, 1990.

## 1.4 WOMEN

An area of major change in practice and attitude over the last ten years is the role of women in the workforce. Between 1979 and 1986 the percentage of women in the work force rose by 24%; in April 1991 the labour force participation rate for women was 52.3% (1979 - 43.1%)<sup>9</sup>

The following are some common attitudes or assumptions held in our society:

- \* that women's 'natural place' is in the home;
- \* that the public sphere (of paid work) is more important than the private domestic sphere;
- \* that society is less patriarchal because more women participate in the paid work force;
- \* that men today participate equally in the domestic household;
- \* that women have equality with men in the workforce;
- \* that equality means sameness;
- \* that women have a choice as to whether or not to enter the paid workforce;
- \* that women's lack of opportunity in the workforce is due to poorer skills and/or less educational qualifications;
- \* that an increase in participation by married women has caused a contraction of youth employment.

## **Domestic Work**

Domestic work, in the private sphere, is also known as shadow work or even non-work. While the work of women in the home is regarded as essential to the economy, through maintaining the family and performing housework or voluntary work, this is not included in the official statistics.<sup>10</sup> Token recognition or lip service is given to the worth of their work, but the reality is different. For example:

- \* Because it is unpaid work, women are not classed as economically active. However, the same tasks, when paid, are considered employment.
- \* This work is considered part of the informal or shadow economy.
- \* The work is underrated and understated and often not considered real work.
- \* The role of homemaker is considered an unskilled trade; performing menial tasks which are boring and monotonous.
- \* The housewife is a provider of consumer durables; the husband is the producer.
- \* This leads to problems of: alienation, isolation, loneliness, lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, anxiety, stress.
- \* It is not just a semantic issue, that domestic work is considered non-work, because it does affect how women's work is perceived and rewarded.
- \* It also affects women's access to status and participation in wider society; for example, how much participation do housewives have in community planning?

What is the historical context of the domestic or private sphere?

With industrialisation and the increasing dependence on wage labour came a separation of spheres of living into:

- a) the public sphere, where the men spent working hours in mines, factories etc, to obtain a wage to support the family. He was the producer, she the consumer, and so his role assumed greater importance;
- b) the private sphere; because waged workers needed to be relieved of their domestic duties, women were allocated this task and confined to the home. Their work came to be regarded as inferior.

Women became economically dependent as never before. Ivan Illich describes it as the 'unproductive domestic enclosure of women'.<sup>11</sup>

## **Paid Work**

The question is no longer whether women, particularly married women, should enter the paid workforce; the reality is that they have entered and continue to do so.

In April 1991 in Australia

- 41.6% of the paid workforce was female
- 52.3% of women were engaged in paid work

- 59.3% of all female employees were in full-time employment.<sup>12</sup>

Reasons why women enter the paid workforce include:

- \* to support themselves;
- \* financial necessity;
- \* social contact, self-esteem, status;
- \* interest in the job;
- \* to exercise power and control in their lives.

Problems encountered by women in the workforce are well documented and include dual burden of work inside and outside home, lack of support experienced in work structures, discrimination, harassment.

### **The Structure of the Workforce**

There are quite notable differences between female and male participation in the workforce.

#### **a) The type of work undertaken**

Women are disproportionately grouped in a small number of industries:

- \* community services;
- \* recreation, personal and other services;
- \* wholesale and retail.

Most women work in a small range of occupations and are disproportionately located in lower status positions.

For example in 1991 :

- \* 55.3% of women were employed as clerks, salespersons and personal service workers.
- \* 18.0% of women were employed in professional and para-professional occupations, of which over half were in teaching and nursing.<sup>13</sup>

#### **b) The number of hours worked**

Women are more likely to do part-time and casual work than men.

In April 1991 women comprised 76.3% of the part-time workforce, with married women accounting for 53.1% of all part-time employees.<sup>14</sup>

Married women tend to have interrupted employment histories, mainly due to time out of the workforce to raise children.

#### **c) Access to employment**

Women are less likely to obtain paid work when they want it.

Official statistics tend to disguise the extent of women's unequal access to paid employment. This is because women constitute three quarters of the hidden unemployed, that is, those who may want to work but don't fit into an official category of unemployed.

#### **d) Income**

Women continue to earn about two thirds of male earnings. In November 1990 the average female wage was 65.4% of the average

male wage. Even if full-time, they earn only 83% of what their male counterparts earn.<sup>15</sup>

### **Why Is There This Disparity?**

In their book, *Double Take*, Baxter, Gibson and Lynch-Blöse, argue that many factors contributed, but that the critical variable was the number of hours of paid work in which women were engaged.<sup>16</sup> That is, women's high involvement in part-time work is a major reason for the differences. A major reason given for engaging in part-time rather than full-time work is domestic responsibility, and that paid work is fitted around the needs of the family.

Women in part-time work face a double burden of paid and unpaid work, probably even more so than women employed full-time. This is because a wife is expected to complete her domestic duties on her days off and be available also to carry out a myriad of voluntary duties in the community.

Part-time work is often not viewed as 'real work'.

Baxter, Gibson and Lynch-Blöse conclude that inequalities in the paid workforce are gender based, and that, despite equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action, gender remains a critical issue in the structuring of workforce participation.

### **The Relationship between the Public and Private Sphere**

Despite changes in society's perception and the increase in female participation in the workforce, the structure of work remains the same, with women living in two worlds and bearing the bulk of domestic and parental responsibility.

The above-mentioned writers found virtually no domestic situations in which the male took primary responsibility.

For women, the private sphere remains supreme, and there is an interrelated nature of women's paid work and unpaid work. There is no such linkage for men; the domestic sphere has little or no impact on his work life. One must remember that women, like men, are not a homogenous group, and that expectations and reasons for engaging or not engaging in paid work vary; not only amongst different kinds of women, but across different stages of their life cycle.

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<sup>9</sup> Graycar, A and Jamrozik, A, *How Australians Live: Social Policy in Theory and Practice*, Macmillian, Aust, 1989, p 165. Also Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force, April 1991* (Cat No 6203.0).

<sup>10</sup> Illich, Ivan, 'Shadow Work', *Technological Change: The Work Ethic Under Challenge*, Teachers Association of NSW, Sydney University, 1981, p 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p 9.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force, Australia*, ABS, Canberra, April 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Average Weekly Earnings States and Australia*, November Quarter, 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Baxter, Janeen & Gibson, Dianne, with Lynch-Blöse, Mark, *Double Take: the links between paid and unpaid work*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1990

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can we avoid polarisation over the roles of women in society and in the church?
2. Proverbs 31 describes a wife 'to be much sought after'. Her attributes are stunning and her achievements overwhelming, both inside and outside the home. Verse 31 demands that we: 'Give her the reward she has earned'.  
How can we 'reward' women, both in the public and private sphere?
3. In what ways can 'home duties' or 'full-time unsalaried work' in the home be a vocation? (see 3.d.1 - 3.d.4)
4. What extra problems do men, working full-time in the domestic sphere, face? (see 3.d.4)
5. Wages are one way of attributing value to work. What are some other ways? (see 3.b.12 - 3.b.14)
6. What is the role of 'social trends' in the church's teaching about women's work?
7. How does the Genesis story of woman as the 'helper' influence a modern Christian understanding of the work of women? Examine this by referring to the role of Eve as helper WITH Adam in the God-given vocation of 'worker in the garden', contrasted to an understanding of Eve as the helper OF Adam.

### **Resources for Further Study**

Baxter, Janeen & Gibson, Dianne with Lynch-Blöse, Mark, *Double Take: the links between paid and unpaid work*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1990.

Hayter, Mary, *The New Eve in Christ*, Latimer, Trend & Co, Plymouth, 1987.  
*Women in Ministry*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1992.

Williams, Claire and Thorpe W, *Beyond Industrial Sociology*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992. Chapter 4.

## 1.5 AGEING AND RETIREMENT

The role and importance of paid employment over the course of a lifetime has altered with changing patterns of retirement and longer life expectancies. We now look forward to longer periods of retirement, either voluntary or forced. Many older workers find it difficult to gain alternative employment if retrenched. Others are accepting voluntary redundancy pay-outs. This has both economic and social consequences for older people and the rest of the community.

In social terms, society still values people largely in terms of their occupation and status. Older people without employment can therefore find it difficult to remain valued and participating members of our community. With the rapid rate of change in society and technology, their knowledge and skills may not be sought after. While legislation is being introduced in some states to prevent discrimination on the basis of age, societal attitudes are still generally 'ageist'.

In economic terms, our ageing population is seen as a 'tax burden' for those in paid employment. For the elderly themselves, poverty can be a major problem. People on superannuation, or reliant on other savings, are affected by the lowering of interest rates, or by having taken out their superannuation at an early age.

Current government policies are emphasising the need for workers and employers to provide for retirement incomes through superannuation schemes. But preparation must also be made for retirement in psychological and social terms.

\* \* \* \* \*

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. The way that we view paid employment during our working lives will have a major impact on our ability to cope with retirement and ageing. Are we consumed by our work, or are we leaving time to develop other 'life-long' interests?
2. Are we developing supportive relationships with others (including family members) outside of our work life?
3. Have we thought about who will be supporting us in our old age?  
Will our 'here-and-now' priorities (eg house, car travel, marriage, children etc) stand us in good stead in our retirement years?
4. Why doesn't our society value and esteem our elderly? After all, 'Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?' (Job 12:12).
5. How can the church help the development of more positive attitudes towards the elderly? (see 4.2.d)
6. 'Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children' Prov. 17:6. What does this verse say to: grandparents, parents and children? (see also Luther's explanation to the Fourth Commandment in his *Large Catechism*).

### **Resources for Further Study**

Becker, Arthur, *Ministry with Older Persons: A guide for clergy and congregations*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1986

## 1.6 OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Many of the issues discussed in this paper regarding work and unemployment are universal issues in our community. However, attitudes to work may vary across cultures, and some groups in our community are particularly disadvantaged in the work place, and in gaining access to work. These disadvantaged groups include:

- \* Aboriginal people,
- \* people born overseas,
- \* people with disabilities.

The issues regarding work and unemployment for each of these groups are complex.

The issue of work for Aboriginal people is a difficult and complex one. The traditional relationship of these people with their land, which enables them to live off the land, has been disrupted by the process of colonisation.

Unemployment among Aboriginal people is now a major problem, with unemployment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being approximately four times the national average. This varies between communities, with remote communities suffering higher unemployment rates. Aboriginal employment opportunities are limited by lack of jobs especially in remote areas, limited educational opportunities and prejudice from non-Aboriginal employers. (Minister for ATSI Affairs, July 1992).

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in Community Development Employment Projects where they receive the equivalent to Job Search or New Start benefits for part-time work in such projects. More such opportunities are needed, as well as the education and training which Aboriginal people need to obtain work.

The prejudice which Aboriginal people face in entering the workforce also needs to be addressed.

Many people with disabilities suffer discrimination in the workforce, despite the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation. Those who work in supported employment situations often do not receive a wage commensurate with their productivity, or enjoy the conditions other workers in similar industries have. For those whose disability makes it difficult to perform productive work, alternatives which provide similar non-monetary benefits to paid employment (such as status, structure, social interactions) are extremely limited.

In 1986 people born outside Australia accounted for 25.2% of the workforce, but the highest proportion of these were employed<sup>17</sup> in manufacturing industries and construction, primarily as manual labourers.

People in these disadvantaged groups who are unemployed face a double disadvantage in gaining access to paid work in a time of high unemployment.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>17</sup> Graycar and Jamrozik, op cit, p 178.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some appropriate ways that Christians can work for justice for disadvantaged groups in the workforce? (see 3.b.10; 3.c.11; 4.2).
2. Racism is still a major problem in Australia, even though educational policies and anti-discrimination laws try to work towards a truly democratic country. List all the overt and subtle forms of racism that you have come in contact with. What are some of the problems disadvantaged groups face due to such prejudiced attitudes and behaviour?
3. 'It is a particularly fine, noble virtue always to put the best construction upon all we may hear about our neighbour . . . and to defend him against the poisonous tongues of those who are busy wherever they can pry out and pounce on something to criticise in their neighbour, misconstruing and twisting things in the worst way'. (*Book of Concord*, 404, 289, Fortress Press, 1959.)
4. We may not be guilty of 'criticising' our disadvantaged neighbour, but the Eighth Commandment implies that we are also to 'put the best construction upon all we may hear about our neighbour'. List some of the ways that your tongue can work for the good of your 'criticised' disadvantaged neighbour. (Also note Matt 7:12.)

### **Resources for Further Study**

Harris, John, *One Blood: 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity*, Albatross Books, Melbourne, 1990.

Shepherd, David, *Bias to the Poor*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1983.

Stott, John, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London, 1985.

Williams, Claire & Thorpe W, *Beyond Industrial Sociology*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992. Chapters 5, 6.

## 1.7 EDUCATION

The word 'education' comes from the Latin 'educare' meaning to draw out. Education today takes place upon the background of significant trends, for example:

- \* the change to a secular humanist view which dominates education;
- \* rapid changes which include the rate of technological change, and changes in the world, lifestyles and environment;
- \* information explosion;
- \* economic imperative — that is, since Australians have a 'third world' view that wealth comes from beneath the ground or off the roof, a need exists for seeing wealth in terms of cleverness, enterprise, 'between the ears';
- \* changes in manufacturing;
- \* gender imbalance;

- \* social issues, (eg areas of bio- and nano-technology).

In view of this, students leaving school today can expect:

- \* to have 6 to 10 changes in jobs;
- \* to spend time unemployed;
- \* to be involved in formal education throughout their life;
- \* to move away from the area or country in which they were born;
- \* to be involved in jobs/careers that do not exist yet;
- \* to be involved in a variety of job patterns;
- \* to have at least 3 or 4 different occupations during a life-time.<sup>18</sup>

Against these considerations, employers are seeking school leavers with particular skills. 'Workers at all levels should have a capacity for cooperative action, decision making, and problem solving. These cognitive, creative, and interpersonal skills have traditionally been seen as among the desirable outcomes of schooling.'<sup>19</sup>

The purpose of education has been debated throughout history. Theories range from the idea that education should be broad and liberal, a preparation for life, to the idea that education is purely pragmatic, a preparation for a job.

Some other purposes are:

- \* a means of individual fulfilment and development;
- \* a means to improve social equality;
- \* a way to enhance equal opportunity, especially for the less privileged;
- \* a way of developing gifts for service in the church and the wider community.

Along with basic numeracy and literacy skills, schools aim to empower students to:

- \* learn to learn, that is, to be responsible for their own learning and to be skilled to continue self education;
- \* learn about technology, that is, to apply knowledge to solve human needs and to apply what they know;
- \* learn to cooperate, to work as a team member;
- \* learn to create, that is, to seek better solutions and if need be, take risks;
- \* learn for enterprise, that is, to be skilled to think, plan, communicate, organise, solve problems, monitor, assess strengths and weaknesses, negotiate, cope with stress and tension, and evaluate;
- \* learn life skills which will enable students to care for themselves and build positive self-esteem, as well as learn responsibility for humanity, other species and the environment.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>18</sup> Based on a presentation by Mr Kevin Richardson of 'Technology School of the Future' — 'Immanuel College, Educating for the Future' — 'The Impact of Technology', August 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Australian Manufacturing Council, 1988, quoted by K Richardson. Ibid.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. What attitudes towards work and unemployment are being conveyed by the education system today?
2. Who should be ultimately responsible for education policy: prospective employers, big business, government, educators, parents or students?
3. What advantages and disadvantages can be found in the existence of both a public and private education system in Australia?
4. Why should we send our children to a Lutheran school? Would this make a difference to their future vocation?
5. In what ways can education help solve the problems presented by technology, unemployment and increased leisure?
6. The modern-day version of Rene Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am', seems to be 'I achieve, therefore I am'. How does our education system reinforce this 'achievement' mentality?
7. 'Too much education can be bad for you'.  
Discuss in relation to hopeful jobseekers who are too skilled for the labour market.
8. 'School is a place of learning to be bored'. To what extent does our education system compartmentalise knowledge and stifle creativity?
9. '. . . but Australia's future will depend as much on its politicians, writers, artists and humanities teachers as on its engineers and chemists. Our primary emphasis in education ought still to be on the general rather than the specific and vocational'. Discuss.

### ***Resources for Further Study***

Blakers, Catherine: *Youth and Society: the two transitions, a review of Australian research on young people in work and education*, ACER Research Monograph no. 3, 1990, Victoria.

Janetzki, E, *The Church Teaches*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1985.

Jones, Barry, *Sleepers Wake! Technology and the Future of Work*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982.

## **1.8 TECHNOLOGY**

Technology has become a major factor in the consideration of work and unemployment. Because technology reaches into almost all areas of human endeavour, life today is lived in what has been called a 'technological society'. While technology is an all-pervasive movement, it impacts particularly upon work and employment. The most obvious effect can be seen in word-processing and computerisation which have replaced 'secretarial pools'. Companies, managers, or directors know the dilemma of being caught between the demands for profit and social responsibility to employees. The decision may be easier when the choice is between the installation of

automation and 'robots' and the relieving of a person or persons of mindless, repetitive work on an assembly line or conveyor belt.

It would be wrong to confine technology just to useful 'gadgets'. Technology can be defined as 'that unified network of techniques, methods and means, which determine the way almost everything is done.'<sup>20</sup> As such, it can be characterised as self-expansionary. A technologist, then, is one who applies techniques to problems which can be reduced to numbers — and this encompasses any area of life, including commerce, industry, medicine, politics and education.

In a sense, all people adopt a technical frame of mind, especially at work. Behind it lies the assumption that workaday reality is fundamentally numerical.

*When the problem at hand has been reduced to facts, statistics, processes, causes and results, then it is understood. Once the mechanism of the problem is grasped, it becomes clear just what manipulations need to be made to push the situation towards the set goal. But today's professional technologist is not allowed to leave that frame of mind at the office - ever since school he has taken it home with him, he brings up his children in it, he votes with it. Workaday reality is the whole reality, which yields to the same analysis. The mechanism of one's environment can also be manipulated, pushed in the direction of one's ideals.<sup>21</sup>*

The challenge which confronts a technological society is the fact that technology is no longer just a 'tool', but an autonomy which is devoid of tradition or morality.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>20</sup>

Van Klinken, G, 'Technology and the Church', *Interchange*, No 22.

<sup>21</sup>

Ibid, p 118. See also Thielicke, H, *Theological Ethics*, Vol 2, pp 294-300.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. Some questions which need to be asked, in relation to any new technology being introduced into an Australian workplace:
  - \* Will this technology remove drudgery and monotony?
  - \* Will more jobs be created or destroyed by it?
  - \* Will its introduction create large scale unemployment?
  - \* Will it allow employers and employees jobs which are designed for more intrinsic qualities such as skill, job control, and interest?
  - \* How will our workplace maintain a 'human face' in the midst of this technological 'improvement'? (see 3.b.3; 3.b.12 - 3.b.14)
2. Discuss the following statement:  
'The argument that technological change is increasing the demand for skills cannot be supported from the Australian evidence. Support for the proposition that the demand for skills is rising, irrespective of cause, is at least equivocal.'

3. 'Technology can cease to be man's ally and become almost his enemy.' How does this relate to God's command for us to 'fill the earth and subdue it'? (see Gen 1:28 and Section 3.b.)

### **Resources for Further Study**

Burke, Gerald, and Rumberger, Russell W, *The Future Impact of Technology on Work and Education*, The Falmer Press, London, 1987.

Illich, Ivan (ed) *Technological Change, The Work Ethic under Challenge*, Economics and Commercial Teachers Association of NSW, Sydney University, 1981.

Jones, Barry, *Sleepers Wake! Technology and the Future of Work*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982.

## **1.9 LEISURE, WORK AND TIME**

How does 'leisure', 'recreation', or 'rest' function in our society? The terms tend to be used interchangeably, but they are not necessarily the same.

In today's western society leisure is actively pursued with the 'same aggressive, competitive and manipulative traits' as work (G Dahl).<sup>22</sup> For example:

- \* separate places are set aside to carry out leisure activities, such as gymnasiums;
- \* special equipment, clothing are required;
- \* professional assistants are employed;
- \* the whole area is viewed as an industry, a growth industry.

For many, this type of leisure is not a time of rest and relaxation, but rather a time for proving oneself.

On an individual level:

- \* for some, where work is the main focus, leisure may be non-existent, resulting in high levels of stress and possible burnout;
- \* for others, leisure may exist but in a distorted or unfulfilling way;
- \* for some, there is the fear of freedom that leisure could bring. The idea that there can be a myriad of things to do outside the confines of work does not tally with the experiences of many.

Ten factors have contributed to the increasing importance placed on leisure today. These are:

- \* shorter working days and working week;
- \* longer holidays;
- \* extended periods of education and lowering of retirement age;
- \* increase in personal income for many;
- \* the development of leisure industries;
- \* improved systems of communication and transportation;
- \* broader programs of health, welfare and education;

- \* increasing government participation;
- \* increasing emphasis upon personal freedom;
- \* mounting scepticism of traditional economic and social values.

Leisure is generally seen in relation to 'paid' work.

a) **Leisure is free time.** This implies

- \* responsibility is not required;
- \* there is a fragmentation of life into separate compartments, such as, work time, leisure time, education and worship time.
- \* It is time saved or left over from something else, usually 'paid work', that takes priority and the bulk of our time.

b) **Leisure is merely entertainment or a distraction**, that is, 'time to kill' or 'time to fill'. Often the pursuits are inane, mindless activities, involving no creativity, leading to further frustration and disillusionment.

c) **Leisure is merely rest or reward from work.**

Work and leisure are seen by some as being inextricably linked: work makes leisure meaningful, and leisure makes work meaningful.

This has various connotations:

- \* that work is the prime purpose of life;
- \* that escape is necessary from the monotony, drudgery, stress (or whatever) of work;
- \* that the reward, ie leisure, must be enjoyed at all costs.

What implications does this have for the unemployed, the unpaid domestic or voluntary worker?

- \* Apart from monetary considerations, although free time is available, they do not necessarily see it as 'leisure' because it hasn't been earned or deserved.
- \* Because leisure is closely related to the way we see 'paid work' and closely linked to consumerism, the division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' is intensified further.<sup>23</sup>

Gordon Dahl states that the above three views lack harmony and integration.<sup>24</sup>

d) **That leisure is re-creation.**

What then should leisure be? Leisure comes from the Latin 'licere' and its root meaning is 'freedom'. Recreation means to 're-create'. Brunner, in examining increased leisure and also work fanaticism, says:

*Both these phenomena come from the same root, the loss of the sense of the eternal meaning of life. When a man loses this divine perspective he throws himself into work and becomes a work fanatic; or he sees no meaning in work and runs away from it. Just as the true motive of work comes from having a place in God's plan, so the desire of the soul for quiet and true recreation comes from the awareness of a higher destiny.<sup>25</sup>*

And Dahl comments:

*Leisure then should be 'that sense of freedom which is realised when a person experiences more fully both his uniqueness and worth as an individual and his acceptance and relationship as part of the world around him'.<sup>26</sup>*

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>22</sup> Dahl, Gordon, *Work, Play and Worship in a Leisure Oriented Society*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minn, 1972, p 17.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, Claire, *The 'Work Ethic', Non-work and Leisure in an Age of Automation*, ANZJS, Nol 19, No 2, July 1983, pp 216, 233.

<sup>24</sup> Dahl, op cit.

<sup>25</sup> Brunner, Emil, op cit, p 70.

<sup>26</sup> Dahl, G, op cit, p 70.

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. 'Our occupation, our job, our work has the potential, the power . . . to enslave us' (Diehl, *Thank God It's Monday*, Fortress, 1982, p63).  
Discuss this in relation to the types of demands work makes on us and the associated dangers.
2. Whose task is it to direct people in appropriate ways of using leisure time? Parents, educators, health experts, sporting groups, theologians, or others?
3. In Genesis 2:2-3 God finishes his work and rests. He then blesses the seventh day and makes it holy. What does this text mean for us in our unemployed/employed state? (see 3.b.11; 3.c.3)
4. How does the Third Commandment and its explanation contribute to our understanding of particular 'worktime/leisure' issues? (see Luther's explanation to the Third Commandment in his *Large Catechism*).
5. God's word, and the preaching of it, changes the way that we talk and think about our leisure time. How does this happen?

### **Resources for Further Study**

Castle, R, Lewis, D E, and Mangan, J, (eds) *Australian Studies: Work, Leisure and Technology*, Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1986

Dahl, Gordon, *Work, Play and Worship in a leisure-orientated Society*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1972

Williams, Claire, *The 'Work Ethic', Non-Work and Leisure in an Age of Automation*, ANZJS, Vol.19, No. 2 July 1983, pp 216-235.