

Inside Canada by Pierre Beaudry

Sharing the poverty

How the Trudeau government is using a Club of Rome scheme to introduce the post-industrial era.

Hey buddy, you have a choice: either you share your job with someone else or you're out of work." This is what Canadian workers have been told since 1981 when Ottawa first implemented a \$10-million work-sharing program because there were simply not enough full-time jobs to go around.

Now that unemployment is reaching the 2-million mark (16.3 percent) and the economy is completely shattered, the work-sharing experiment has grown into a \$350-million-a-year subsidy scheme involving around 250,000 workers and over 12,000 companies. And this is just the beginning.

All this has nothing to do with humanitarianism. It is a deliberate Club of Rome plan to systematically destroy the values of industrial work and impose a post-industrial order: a zero-growth economy modeled on a "high-tech" feudal village. As a backup, emergency measures, as per the Order in Council of June 1981, are already in place to open up "civilian internment camps."

Work-sharing was first introduced to attract employers and employees into accepting a redistribution of work to avoid layoffs. A worker would accept a voluntary reduction in salary of about 16 percent and a corresponding loss of work hours to keep his co-worker on the job. The government gives the employees unemployment benefits for the work hours lost. The scheme is 1.6 percent more costly than regular unemployment insurance.

A discussion paper prepared by the

Department of Employment and Immigration under the aptly named Minister Lloyd Axworthy, reports that on April 11, 50 percent of the workers on the program were laid off, soon after the government cut off unemployment benefits paid to the workers in the program, and that now the rules would have to be changed in the middle of the game.

Blaming companies for underestimating the number of potential layoffs, Axworthy is now offering another choice, "a deal they can't refuse." "For all the wonderful talk which we hear about high technology strategies that are coming out . . . they will never work unless you can provide a degree of job security for workers," he told the *Toronto Globe and Mail* on April 13. The next day, Axworthy made this friendly suggestion: "Work-sharing can be of advantage to firms that foresee permanent reduction in their labor demands. . . . Work sharing, integrated with training and skill development, has an obvious role to play in preparing Canadians for the new work world." This message should be clear to everyone. If you want to be part of the "new work world," you have a choice: either you recycle or you lose your part-time job.

Who is behind this conspiracy? Gilles Cloutier, a member of the Club of Rome and secretary-general of the Montreal-based think tank Gamma Group, told *EIR* recently that Ottawa was following the Club's blueprint on work-sharing. "We have direct access to Axworthy's office, the secretary of

state office of Mr. Joyal, the Privy Council, and we are also familiar with the prime minister's office," Cloutier said. The problem, he added, is that "Axworthy's work sharing is only a short-term political posture. It's a political balloon. This is only a way to change the unemployment figures."

Kimon Valaskakis, a personal friend of Club of Rome founder Aurelio Peccei who heads the Gamma Group, told the *Montreal Gazette* on March 14 that, according to their scenario, Canada will have 30 percent unemployment by 1990, "so we should reduce the work week to share the available work." He explained that "the robots of this new industrial revolution will invade all economic sectors and destroy more jobs than they will create. . . . That's why we need a national game plan. There is no other way to go." He concluded by saying that "if we don't protect the income of displaced workers," we will "have social unrest."

Both Cloutier (whose "godfather" in the Club of Rome is Sen. Maurice Lamontagne, he said) and Valaskakis reported directly to Aurelio Peccei in mid-April when the Club of Rome held a secret meeting in the Chateau Montebello, Quebec.

So far there hasn't been any serious opposition to this corporatist plan. Shirley Carr, vice-president of the Canadian Parliament and a Socialist International asset, who had to speak up for organized labor, said that work-sharing was "unacceptable. You don't build a full-time economy on part-time jobs." On the political scene, the opposition is silent; it seems to agree with arch-zero-growther Richard Gwyn, who cynically declared to the *Gazette* April 11 that "a plan to redistribute work may be the most persuasive political doctrine of all: an idea whose time has come."