

## Editorial

### *The sanctity of human labor*

One of the most tragic elements of the present economic debacle—typical of all deep depressions—is the waste of human creativity. A ruthless ideology of cost-cutting comes to replace a civilized regard for the dignity and value of human life. This is seen in the increasing rationalization of moves to chisel from the elderly and rob the defenseless of life itself—whether by rendering them without adequate food and shelter or denying them adequate medical care, or even by outright murder (politely known as euthanasia or as “choice”).

More subtle but hardly less devastating in the long run, is the dismissal of men and women from their working lives. The obvious side of this is in the inability to put back together working teams with the same levels of efficiency—by simply rehiring new labor when there is an uptick in the economy. This is true even of teams of workers on the factory floor; it is especially so of the most highly skilled researchers working as scientists or engineers.

The point has been raised in a dramatic fashion about the potentially tragic loss—and not only to the peoples of the former Soviet Union—by former Soviet Space Administrator Roald Sagdeev, who testified about this before the U.S. Congress on Feb. 21. Sadly, it is equally true in the United States today, although probably still to a lesser degree. For example, it is expected that within the next four years approximately 100,000 jobs will be lost in the U.S. aerospace industry due to cutbacks in defense.

Surely no one would wish to keep the Cold War alive merely in order to provide jobs, especially when there is a crying need for the very same skills to be applied to building an advanced infrastructure on Earth and in space—from magnetically levitated transportation systems to hypersonic space vehicles. Shipbuilding, railroad construction, production of tractors—all of these are needed in a rational world. Indeed it is the case that there is a devastating shortage of just the kind of labor now being declared redundant by corporations such as General Motors.

But equally as important as the skills of these workers which are now being allowed to lie fallow, as they join the ranks of the unemployed or take jobs in service industries, is the concomitant destruction of a worth ethic. This is true most notably in the United States, but it is a problem of global proportions.

Creativity is not just the prerogative of the great artist or top scientist. Each and every one of us has the opportunity and the obligation to bring inventiveness and creativity to the tasks of life. It is this which establishes our special bond with the Creator.

A properly run factory fosters such a spirit of creativity by encouraging an interchange among workers and between them and the supervisory staff, about how to improve the process of production. In this way there is a continuity between the more mundane jobs and the research and development teams who develop the new advances in technology which they must apply. This is the basis for the kind of healthy identity with one's work which can produce a genuine sense of mission.

In the United States, such a sense of mission orientation was found most notably in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Symptomatic of a kind of rot in the fabric of national life in the United States today, is the fact that NASA Administrator Richard Truly has just been forced out of his job—not for pragmatic, economic reasons—but as a warning to the staff of NASA, that the Bush-Quayle administration will not allow mission orientation to stand in the way of practical politics.

NASA has been made a political football, in which rhetoric replaces serious purpose among Democrats and Republicans alike, and programs such as the Space Station are allowed to wither away, and the politicians will tolerate no opposition.

The de facto firing of Richard Truly is symptomatic of a country so sick that its President and vice president can still deny the seriousness of the present depression, while the lives of good men and women are destroyed in order to preserve the assets of banks.