

## Report from Paris by Emmanuel Grenier

### Industrialists blast Club of Rome

*Leaders of French heavy industry present a six-point plan to counter British and U.S. "post-industrial" strategies.*

In a conference here on "The New Industrial Imperative" Nov. 14, French industrialists condemned by name the Club of Rome, the leading malthusian institution of Europe, and Sicco Mansholt, one of the most influential zero-growth ideologues. Underlining the urgency of an industrial renewal for France, they presented a six-point plan which echoes the anti-malthusian American economist Lyndon LaRouche's ideas. Among other things, it calls for:

- training 10,000 new engineers per year (beyond the current 14,000);
- increasing the part of GNP earmarked to productive investment from 12 to 15%;
- doubling the research effort in terms of both number of engineers and researchers and in terms of money;
- building a European market which reflects the fact that industry, not finance, is the heart of an economy.

Lionel Stoléru, the French planning minister, hammered home: "There is no such thing as a post-industrial society; there are only pre-industrial societies, industrial societies, or societies which failed in their strategic industrial planning, as could be the case with the U.S. and England today."

On Nov. 13, *Le Figaro* newspaper published a manifesto on the theme of the conference, signed "by the presidents of seven industrial federations." The federations include those dealing with chemical industry, machine tools, textiles, metallurgy and mining, agro-industry, automobile construction, and electric and electronic industries.

They write, "We want to denounce the myth of the 'post-industrial' society, which, for 20 years, has been a powerful factor for the demobilization of energies, to the detriment of industry." They say a new boost must be given to industry in France, especially as "the 20th century has been the century of industry," and industry has come to be seen as "the instrument of progress, capable of assuring people more security, more well-being, and more independence."

The federation presidents note that "today, the countries that find themselves most committed to the 'post-industrial' path are in economic decline: the U.S.A. and Great Britain. Conversely, those who have made industry a national priority dominate the world economy: Japan and Germany."

For years, in France as elsewhere, the "experts" have been singing the siren song that industry is passé. From the technetronic revolution of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, to "small is beautiful," everyone agreed: Heavy industry, with its steel plants and shipyards, was doomed to go the way of the dinosaurs.

Recently, the deputy from Savoy, Michel Barnier, recited the malthusian ravings of the late Club of Rome founder Aurelio Peccei without even raising an eyebrow among his colleagues in the National Assembly. Hugues de Jouvenal, leader of the Futuribles, the French offshoot of the Club of Rome, appealed over French radio for cuts in spending for the elderly and handicapped.

That's why it is so important that such a high-level institution in France

should denounce by name the organization that promotes policies potentially worse than Hitler's.

Fear, more than altruism, is the likely spur. Though France is still the fourth largest industrial power, for the first time since World War II, it has been a net importer of industrial goods for three years in a row (1987-89). For every 100 francs invested in capital goods, 42 francs are imported. With German heavy industry aiming at Eastern European markets, industrial France has to equip itself to be Germany's partner, not just its best customer.

The French economy is also short on engineers, and even more so on technicians. Only 25% of the working population has a high school-level education or higher, while in Germany, 75% of the youth start out with professional training. France graduates only 14,000 engineers a year, as opposed to 20,000 in Great Britain, and 29,000 in the former West Germany. The general manager of Alsthom Fluides, Henri Morin, summed it up, "Engineering graduates in France are like water in hot countries: There are still not enough, and they evaporate." In fact, only 8-10,000 French engineering graduates actually practice their profession. The others "evaporate" into the service sector, banking, and commerce.

Horst Franck, the CEO of Bosch-France, presented some clues about the German system. "In our country, professional training is not a dead end because the possibilities of promotion in the company or advancing in professional life are multiple" compared to French graduates, he explained. "We think it essential for technicians and middle-level cadres to come out of a lower rank in the hierarchy. This is essential for motivating people who start their careers as blue-collar workers."