Work for All: Why and How in a World of Rapid Change

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Outline of the paper:
1. **Introduction**
    1.1. **The dominant paradigm**
    1.2. **The unfaced challenge**
    1.3. **An alternative paradigm**

2. **WHY there should be work for all in a rapidly changing world**

    2.1. **Understanding of work**
        2.1.1. **Work contributes to development**
            2.1.1.1.   **Personal development**
            2.1.1.2.   **Development of the world**
        2.1.2. **Work contributes to the provision of goods and services**
            2.1.2.1.   **Sustainability**
        2.1.3. **Work has a social dimension**
            2.1.3.1.   **Women and work**
            2.1.3.2.   **Determining the monetary payment for work**
        2.1.4. **Work as toil and struggle**

    2.2. **Right to work**

3. **HOW there can be meaningful work and adequate income for all in a world of rapid change**

    3.1. **Work - the How?**
        3.1.1. **Developing a wider understanding of work and acknowledging its value**
        3.1.2. **Towards active labour market policies that respect human dignity**
        3.1.3. **The story of a pilot project - The Part-Time Job Opportunities Programme (Ireland).**
            3.1.3.1.   **Socio-economic context**

1. Introduction

1.1. **The dominant paradigm**

There is one dominant framework or paradigm concerning work that is accepted in most of the western world. This paradigm equates meaningful work with paid employment. It asserts that full time jobs are available for everyone seeking them, that these jobs will provide adequate income for people holding them and their 'dependants' and that good social insurance will be available for people who are sick or unemployed. In this way everyone will have meaningful work, adequate income, participate in the life of the society and poverty would be eliminated. This is the paradigm that underpins most public policy initiatives seeking to address work-related issues.

There have been serious critiques of this paradigm in recent years. These have come from a wide range of perspectives. For example Rifkin, writing in 1995 stated:

> '*From the beginning, civilisation has been structured, in large part, around the concept of work. From the Paleolithic hunter/gatherer and Neolithic farmer to the medieval craftsman and assembly line worker of the current century, work has been an integral part of daily existence. Now, for the first time, human labour is being systematically eliminated from the production process. Within less than a century, "mass" work in the market sector is likely to be phased out in virtually all of the industrialised nations of the world. A new generation of sophisticated information and communication technologies is being hurried into a wide variety of work situations. Intelligent machines are replacing human beings in countless tasks, forcing millions of blue and white collar workers into unemployment lines, or worse still breadlines.*'[1]

Rifkin went on to say

> "*Caught in the throes of increasing global competition and rising costs of labour, multinational corporations seem determined to hasten the transition from human workers to machine surrogates. Their revolutionary ardour has been fanned, of late by compelling bottom line considerations. In Europe, where rising labour costs are blamed for a stagnating economy and a loss of competitiveness in world markets, companies are hurrying to replace their workforce with the new information and telecommunications technologies.*"[2]

This is one analysis of what is happening to human work. It challenges the dominant paradigm at a most profound level. But it is not the only analysis that presents such a challenge. Guy Standing, senior economist at the Geneva office of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) writing in 1999 has also presented a telling critique. He argues that:

> *We have made a mess of 'work' since we made an ideal of labour. So much has this been the case in the twentieth century that work that is not labour is not counted. Distinctions should be made between work, labour and employment.*[3]

Standing has distinguished between the three as follows:

> *…Work is defined as rounded activity combining creative, conceptual and analytical thinking and use of manual aptitudes - the vita activa of human existence… The notion of labour is quite different…We may define labour as activity done under some duress, and some sense of control by others or by institutions or by technology, or more likely by a combination of all three…Employment is used with several meanings. For many analysts, it only covers activity entailing the expectation of a wage for tasks performed…In the end, statistical practices have been based largely on convention and concern over 'unemployment'… A peculiarity of employment is that it covers all forms of labour but not all forms of work. Indeed, it strangely excludes certain types of work that contribute to human welfare and development, whereas it includes activities that are unproductive that do not contribute significantly to either. Most analysts would recognise this and then continue with their analyses as if it did not matter.* [4]

Guy Standing also provides a range of other questions that he believes needs to be addressed. Many other thinkers and analysts raise similar questions.   In a paper of this length it is not possible to treat these in any comprehensive way.   Suffice it to say here that they present a very fundamental challenge to the dominant paradigm on work that underpins policy analysis and development at this time.   We believe the dominant paradigm is fundamentally flawed and should be challenged.   We are concerned in particular with its failure to provide a socially just structure or framework within which people can work and access income in a meaningful way.

1.2. The unfaced challenge

Looking at the global figures for unemployment serious questions arise. While the number of jobs has grown in many areas there are very high unemployment levels in many nation states in the 'developed' world.   High levels of unemployment persist despite the best efforts of policy makers to address the issue.   The level of unemployment now deemed to be 'acceptable' has risen dramatically.   So too has the level of unemployment that constitutes the so-called 'full employment' scenario.   Only a few countries are anywhere close to full employment. (The authors' own country, Ireland, is among this small group of countries. It is clear to us that the situation that has produced full employment in Ireland is not repeatable in every country of the world and may not be sustained in Ireland itself in the longer term.)

In the economically poorer countries of the 'third' world unemployment is substantially higher than it is in the wealthier 'developed' countries.   Much of the employment available to many people in these 'third world' countries is extremely low-paid and does not meet the requirement of adequacy to ensure people can access what is required to live life with dignity.

It is obvious that the dominant paradigm outlined above is, for the most part, a spectacular failure. It fails to recognise a wide range of meaningful work.   It does not provide sufficient jobs to eliminate unemployment.   Neither does it provide sufficient income to ensure people can live life with dignity.   In this context there is a major challenge facing politicians, policy-makers, social philosophers and, in particular,

Churches who claim to play a key role in the area of values in the wider society.   The current situation could be summarised as follows:

♦   Everyone has a right and a responsibility to work.
♦   Work is defined as 'having a job' or 'being in paid employment'.   The only work that is valued is work that fits into this category.
♦   The challenge arises when one has to face the question: how can this right/responsibility be exercised in a world without full employment and without the prospect of full employment in the foreseeable future?
♦   This provides a special challenge to the Roman Catholic Church and to Catholic Social Teaching that continues to insist that everyone have this right and responsibility to work. The Church and Catholic Social Teaching has provided much material in answering the question why?   It has been far less successful at answering the question how? The answers it has provided to date are weak and lack credibility in forums outside the Church when this issue is being addressed.

1.3. **An alternative paradigm**

In a range of publications over the past two decades the authors of this paper have argued for an alternative paradigm to the one which dominates thinking and policy making at present. We suggest that an alternative paradigm must focus on two deeply inter-related issues i.e. work and income.

Work would be understood, as any activity that contributes to the development of one's self, family, community or the wider society. This much broader understanding of work cannot be operative, however, unless the issue of income is also addressed in a coherent way. At present, the dominant paradigm sees income being provided as payment for a job done.   Additional income is (or should be, according to the dominant paradigm) provided through social security systems that ensure the ill, the elderly and other categories of people such as the unemployed are not left to starve. In the new paradigm we are proposing, income would be seen as a birthright. Every person would have a right to sufficient income to live life with basic dignity. Systems (or a system) to ensure that everyone had such an income would be developed and put in place.

As Christians the authors believe that everyone has a right to work and a right to sufficient income to live life with dignity.   We believe that there should and could be work for all.   This paper outlines some of our ideas on why and how this can be delivered in a world of rapid change.   In a paper as short as this, however, we can only present a few ideas and examples. We welcome all responses, critiques, and suggestions for changes or improvements in what we propose. The issues addressed here are central to the shape of the future. Credible answers need to be sought and found and acted upon, if the dignity of every human person is to be protected and respected throughout the twenty first century.   In the next sections we address the question why?   In the concluding sections we address the question how?

2. WHY there should be work for all in a rapidly changing world.

2.1. Understanding of work

The writings of some of the great teachers of philosophy, theology, sociology and economics help us to reflect on the ambivalence and ambiguity of work. In the religious tradition, work has been assessed both positively and negatively. It is seen as creative, as a service to community and as a divine vocation. Yet it is also negatively evaluated as a punishment for sin. In contemporary society a similar ambivalence exists. On the one hand, work is seen as important for the individual's self-concept, sense of fulfilment and integration with society. On the other hand work is tolerated as a means to an end: many people work not so much for the sake of the work itself but for the rewards that work brings. It is interesting to note that the first book of the Bible reflects this ambivalence. Genesis 1:15 says '*God took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it*'. Here the author reflects on the development aspect of work. In the next chapter the author's attention turns to the ascetical nature of work. '*Accursed be the soil because of you. With suffering shall you get your food from it*' (Gen. 2:17)

From the reflections of people through the ages we can identify four aspects of human work:
♦   Work facilitates the development of the person and the world.
♦   Work is needed in the provision of goods and services.
♦   Work is a central ingredient of social interaction.
♦   Work involves struggle and toil.
We now look at each of these aspects in turn.

2.1.1.   Work Contributes to Development

It seems valid to summarise the many reflections on development under two headings, the development of the person and the development of the world.

2.1.1.1.   Personal Development

Work is an essential ingredient in the development of the person. Work is central to our existence and cannot be pushed to the periphery. It is one of the ways we show our distinctiveness from the rest of nature and realise our humanity. At birth we are just rough sketches waiting for the activity of our daily living to develop our potential. As Pope John Paul II stated, through work the person '*not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense becomes more a human being*'.[5] What we do has a major role in forming who we are. It is in our efforts at work that we discover our gifts and talents. Seen in this light work is more than what it produces. It is more than a means of subsistence since it also contributes to the development of the person. Erich Fromm outlined this aspect of work very well when he wrote:

> '*In the process of work, that is the moulding and changing of nature outside of himself, man moulds and changes himself. He emerges from nature by*

mastering her; he develops his powers of co-operation, or reason, his sense of beauty.
He separates himself from nature, from the original unity with her, but at the same time unites himself with her again as her master and builder. The more his work develops, the more his individuality develops. In moulding nature and re-creating her, he learns to make use of his powers, increasing his skill and creativeness. Whether we think of the beautiful paintings in the caves of Southern France, the ornaments on weapons among primitive people, the statues and temples of Greece, the Cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the chairs and tables made by skilled craftsmen, or the cultivation of flowers, trees or corn by peasants – all are expressions of the creative transformation of nature by man's reason and skill' [6].

While recognising that self-expression and human development are important aspects of work we must also acknowledge that not all work is fully humanising and that almost every form of work threatens to alienate some human capacities. Work, which is routine monotonous and tightly supervised gives little scope for personal growth and initiative. It is desirable to bear this fact in mind when talking about the virtues of work. This fact becomes very vivid when we think of the vast areas of work which although essential to the good ordering of the community are unpleasant and difficult e.g. sewage disposal and refuse collection.   Likewise there is activity that may jeopardise intellectual, physical or psychological health.   There is activity that may not allow individual creativity.   There is activity that may not foster self-respect.

It is clear that work is of vital importance to personal development.   Reflecting on its importance it is clear that more effort needs to be invested in ensuring that every person has an opportunity to do some work which is challenging and contributes to personal development.

2.1.1.2.   Development of Our World

The Christian tradition gives strong support to the view of work as a response to God's invitation to enter into the development of the material universe of which we are part. Human beings not only fit into God's plan but also co-operate in bringing it to consummation[7].   We can co-operate with God in building a better world. Much of the industrialisation process and the development of technology while being the result of this development are also a means toward greater development. The challenge of today is to choose from the tools and processes available so that we build a world that is sustainable, humane and ecological.

The industrialisation process of the last few hundred years has had a major impact on how modern society views work. This was a time of great change in the history of the human family. It was a time when society set itself the project of production so that a modest level of goods and services would be available to everyone. Serving this production project came to be seen as the most important contribution a person could make to society. The understanding of work was confined to those activities, which served production. People were rewarded financially and socially for participating in this process. Gradually work was equated with the job for which there was financial reward.

The renowned sociologist Max Weber studied the process of industrialisation in its early years. Reflecting on the writings of Max Weber, Julien Freund examined how the Reformation and Calvin, in particular, inspired a new view of work. He identified three aspects in particular.

Firstly asceticism. The asceticism of medieval monasticism was revived by Calvin and transformed to serve his vision. It was important that people would commit themselves to hard work and that they would not become satisfied with wealth and consumer goods. This view facilitated the re-investment of capital in the project. '*What can, after all, be done with money that one has earned but cannot spend on one's pleasure? It can only be reinvested in the enterprise to develop it*'[8].

Secondly, work it seen as a calling. For the Reformers work became a task imposed by God and success in one's trade or profession became a sign of election. Calvinists, who believed in predestination, were in a particularly vulnerable position. If pre-destination was the decision of an immutable God and there was nothing one could do to achieve salvation, and if the whole focus of one's religious life was salvation, naturally there was a great need among believers to know whether or not they were among the saved. Success in one's secular activities was considered to be the best indicator of being among the saved.

This led to a drive for material success to ensure a place among the saved. Of course the corollary of this position was the belief that those who were not "successful" were the damned. This understanding absolved people from social responsibility. If people were already damned it really did not matter how employers or society treated them. Thus work took on the status of an ethical value and came to be known as a 'duty' or a 'moral obligation'. By becoming a 'calling', work tended to become an end in itself. In the twentieth century the view of work as 'duty' has developed into something new. '*Ever-increasing production, the drive to make bigger and better things, have become aims in themselves, new ideals. Work had become alienated from the working person*'[9].

Thirdly, Freund examine how riches and poverty effect the view of work. The medieval Church had condemned wealth and exalted poverty. If the industrialisation process was to make progress, it was important that this attitude towards wealth be changed. Puritanism argued that riches were only evil if they were placed at the service of base, irrational passions. They were not evil if they were used in accordance with the demands of ethics and the calling to be stewards of God's goods. After all if '*God shows to one of his elect an opportunity to make a profit, he does it intentionally. The good Christian must respond to this appeal*'[10].

As we reap the harvest of many generations of thought, experimentation and exploitation, we have arrived at a point of much confusion about the place of work in the development of our world. We tend to confuse the ends with the means. Employment or the generating of profits are often seen as ends in themselves.   For many people and whole communities the possibility of responding to the invitation to be involved in the project of creation[11] has been blocked.

2.1.2. Work Contributes to the Provision of Goods and Services

Work is an essential element in the provision of goods and services and not only this, but much of the work in our world is directed to this area. As the human family has increased and developed so has the need for goods and services. Healthy human beings want to grow and help others to grow and develop. This contribution to society is made through participation in areas such as the services and production sectors. Fulfilling the needs for goods and services is an escalating area of activity. Even when bodily needs are met the needs of the spirit are inexhaustible. The challenge is to respond to the remarkably diverse needs of persons in the context of a finite world.

Often the work involved in providing goods and services can be repetitive, monotonous, boring and toil laden, where opportunities for creativity, initiative and personal development are rare. When reflecting on this aspect of work the New Dictionary of Theology says '*Without denying the primacy of the worker, it can be said that these goods have a value beyond that of the worker who produces them. An object produced for selfish reasons or through alienating work still has value in itself and for persons*'[12]. It is important to give due acknowledgement to this aspect of work and to encourage every initiative that struggles to reduce the alienation that can be part of this type of work.

2.1.2.1. Sustainability

The principle of sustainability poses many questions for society in its provision of goods and services. The paradox is that as we satisfy our needs with even more goods, we create still more needs (or wants?) to be satisfied. The market thrives on creating more aspirations, expectations and needs. This is done overtly through advertising and also in a more subtle manner through other mass media e.g. 'soaps' on television, travel programmes etc.

Given the sophistication of many of our societies today and the unprecedented level of goods and services, now might be an opportune moment to evaluate *what services are needed* to promote human and ecological development. In particular we should evaluate the needs of the human spirit. In this evaluation it is important to ask who is deciding the needs and what criteria are being used in making these decisions.

A second part of this evaluation should research the best methods of providing those goods and services in a *finite* world. Consideration should be given to the non-renewable earth's resources, to conservation strategies, to reduction of pollution and to waste management, all of which should be built into our planning. While economic values have a place in this discussion they should not be the sole determinants. Cultural, social, political and ecological values are essential to this evaluation.

A third and most important aspect of this evaluation is *people;* people who receive the service, people who provide the service and people who are indirectly effected by the service. For those who receive, we should ask if human dignity is promoted and human development facilitated through the service. For those who provide the service we need to evaluate the social status, conditions of work, incentives and rewards systems we attach to the various levels of service. We should question the order of

importance bestowed on services and how these are rewarded. If present day rewards and incentives are to be taken as the measure of how we rate our services then providing financial services is very important while providing meals and taking care of children is not important.

Besides those who receive and those who provide, a third group of people is indirectly effected by our goods and services e.g. their land may have been appropriated to provide flowers to decorate our tables and halls or cheaper hamburgers for our fast food outlets. The majority of these people live in third world countries where they have very little power over how their countries' natural resources are used or how their labour is rewarded.

A commitment to sustainability will challenge current trends in urbanisation policy and the neglect of rural development policy. The quest for a more sustainable lifestyle will produce a demand for new skills and new professions.

2.1.3.   Work has a Social Dimension

The importance of the social dimension of work is well recognised.
Laborem Exercens outlines three aspects of this dimension of work, firstly, making family life and its upkeep possible, secondly, contributing to the process of education in the family and thirdly contributing to society. The family is the basic unit of society. The formation and nurturing of family is essential to the continuation of human society. Laborem Exercens states that '*work constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life…work is a condition for making it possible to found a family, since the family requires the means of subsistence which man normally gains through work….Work and industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family.*'[13] Although the Encyclical has not developed these reflections on the role of work in the family, it has pointed to crucial issues we need to debate. Among these issues are the right of children to grow up in a family where their parents feel they are making a contribution to their own upkeep and to the development of the society; the way work is organised and the right of the person to participate in the decisions about the work that affect him/her.

By our work we recognise and respond to the need to make a contribution to the community. Schumacher describes this aspect of work as the need for every one of us to use and perfect our gifts *'in co-operation with others so as to liberate ourselves from our egocentricity'*[14]. Laborem Exercens puts it more altruistically when it says that the person intends his/her '*work also to increase the common good developed together with compatriots, thus realising that in this way work serves to add to the heritage of the whole human family, of all people living in the world'*[15] This understanding presupposes that the community recognises our membership and welcomes our work contribution. This mutuality of membership of the community is recognised, among others, by theologians. Fiorenza, for example says '*Individuals depend upon one another and upon society. They perform services for others and they expect a reciprocal return. Even if the individual's intentions are selfish the objective purpose of work is ordered to the community'*[16].

Through the ages societies have derived different mechanisms for bestowing status on their membership e.g. age, ancestry, gender etc. according as these were seen to contribute to the best ordering of the community. Over the past two hundred years as the human project of increased production and industrialisation developed, the determinants of social status changed from what they had been in previous ages. If this human project was to be successful it was important that those who participated would be rewarded not only materially but also socially. So in the western world of today, social status is conferred by the job one does. Maybe it would be more precise to say status is conferred by the amount of money paid for the job done.

We tend to value the activity by the amount paid for it. We take this a step further by valuing people according to the amount they get paid for the jobs they do. Individuals internalise this system and so value themselves according to the income they receive for the job done. We have reached a stage where people value themselves and others according to the income they receive. Social relationships are determined by the jobs in which people find themselves. The dependants of a person with a job often draw their meaning and value from this job. Since the person is much more than the job that they or the "breadwinner" does, it is urgent that we assess our value systems so that the unique value of each person is affirmed.

The richness and vibrancy of every society is determined by the level of involvement of all its members. In theory we live in a democracy where all are free to participate. However in practice we have so structured our decision-making that it is only those in jobs that have a voice. We need decision-making structures that involve the total adult population and give them a real voice in shaping the decisions that effect them.

We should challenge two assumptions of today's society in this social area.

(a) the assumption that equates work with a job. While it is true that most jobs are work we should also acknowledge and value the vast amount of work that is done daily in our society but is not financially rewarded (housework, care of children, community work etc.)

(b) the assumption which says that the honourable way to contribute to and participate in society today is through a job. People contribute through all their work, not just their paid employment. It would be a worthwhile and sobering exercise to put a monitory value on the work done by the adult population who do not have jobs but make a huge contribution to the life of our societies through their work.

Some societies are better than others in affirming the contribution of their individual members to the communal project. The New Dictionary of Theology asserts that:

> *'The noblest social goal of work is to provide the basis for a culture in which all can realise their fullest human potential .... Workers enter an historical process of giving and taking, producing and consuming the community's goods. They realise their social nature not only through weaving the social fabric out of these human activities and products. In the contemporary world, one's neighbour is not just the stranger one meets, but all who live in the global village. Thus charity must become political, effective, using the wealth and power that derive from work to aid the unmet stranger. If the first*

consideration about work is the worker, the second is what it does to and for and with humanity' [17].

These are some of the possibilities and challenges presented by the social dimension of work.

2.1.3.1.   **Women and Work**

Another challenge is the need to acknowledge and reward the place of 'women's work' in the social order and to bestow on it an equal status with 'men's work'. Full expression in a partnership of mutuality should be given to both the masculine and feminine dimensions of human work. In a finite world, the job's promise of wealth, power, control and economic growth needs to be complemented with the dynamics of belonging, nurturing, caring receptivity and self-giving.

While the industrial revolution has brought great gains for the human family it has also had its price. Work became associated with a 'product' that could be measured. Women in particular have borne the costs as they saw their work of caring and nurturing poorly rewarded and given second place to the "work of production". At the end of a long laborious day of nurturing and caring there may be very little 'product' to show. Is this why society rewards this work so poorly? It is time to abandon the application of the crude industrial measurements of the late 18th century to the work of caring and nurturing. Social and monetary rewards for this work should be such as to facilitate both men and women getting involved.

Since other speakers at this Conference are looking specifically at gender issues in relation to work we will not discus it further here

2.1.3.2.   **Determining the Monetary Payment for Work**

The industrial revolution demanded that people, particularly men, leave farms and come into a central location to work in mines and factories. These people could no longer provide their own food and shelter. To compensate for this loss wages were introduced. The early days of industrialisation were associated with heavy manual labour. Payment for this labour was in direct proportion to what was visibly produced, wages were the incentive to increase production. Today, wages for the job are not determined by what is produced but rather by the technology used or the power of one's negotiating group. It is time to abandon the application of the crude industrial measurements of the late 18th century to the work of caring and nurturing. Social and monetary rewards for this work should be such as to facilitate both men and women being involved.

2.1.4. **Work as Toil and Struggle**

There are aspects to work, which we find monotonous, dull and painful. These are the times when it is easy to believe that the earth is cursed and that we earn our bread by

the sweat of our brow. For many who work in repetitive, boring jobs this aspect of work is a regular experience. Work is an activity not only devoted to perfecting reality, it is also focused on maintaining reality and keeping it from degeneration. This maintenance aspect of work, which is a necessity, can bring with it much toil and boredom.

Since all work has some toil attached to it, it is not surprising that a wide variety of religious literature reflects on this aspect of work. The Christian tradition sees it as participation with Christ in his entrance into and crucifixion by a flawed world. Thomas Aquinas taught that work was important to his fellow monks for four reasons. Two of these reasons said it was a bridle of the concupiscence of the flesh and it was a remedy against idleness which is the source of evil (the other two reasons saw work as a means of livelihood and a source of almsgiving)[18]. This religious view does not see work as an end in itself. It can be seen as a penance for the sin, as a means of forming a self-disciplined, industrious orderly life. In more recent times however, theologians, while seeing this aspect of work as a reminder to us that this world is not and never will be heaven, also call for reforms of working conditions so as to remove some of the toil and boredom. Pope John Paul II sees the global meaning of work in the context of the Paschal Mystery; the toil is a share in the cross, the striving *'to make life more human'* an aspect of the Resurrection[19].

We have looked at work under the four functions of development, provision of goods and services, its ability to facilitate social interaction, and the toil and struggle associated with work. Now we wish to look at the right to work.

2.2. Right to Work

As illustrated above, various disciplines through the ages have shown that the human species understood work to be a means of sustenance and of developing self and society. In particular religious traditions expected every adult to work. The preservation of life was understood to be a duty placed on all. It follows therefore, that each one has a natural right to procure what is required in order to preserve life. The only way many people can procure these needs is through their work[27]. Theology is just one of the places in which the basic human need for sustenance is linked to work.

The second basic need of the human being, that is the need for development, is also linked to work. Pope John Paul II strongly emphasised the conviction that every adult should work and stated the reasons why this is so. He said '*Work is an obligation, that is to say a duty on the part of everyone, everyone must work both because the creator has commanded it and because of his/her own humanity which requires work in order to be maintained and developed*'[20]. He goes on to talk about the moral rights corresponding to this obligation. If every person has a right to work, then society has the obligation to structure itself in a way that makes work accessible to all. He sees this structuring being done through the activities of both the direct and "indirect" employers[21]

The 'right to work' is usually interpreted as the 'right to employment'.   In this understanding it is problematic in a world that shows little, if any, interest in really

generating a full-employment world.   A century and a half ago De Tocqueville saw the implications of recognising this understanding of the 'right to work'.   His observations have had a resonance down the years. He wrote:

> *To grant every man in particular the general, absolute and incontrovertible right to work necessarily leads to one of the following consequences: Either the State will undertake to give to all workers applying to it the employment they lack, and will then gradually be drawn into industry, to become the industrial entrepreneur that is omnipresent, the only one that cannot refuse work and the one that will normally have to dictate the least task; it will inevitably be led to become the principal, and soon, as it were, the sole industrial entrepreneur…Now that is communism .*
>
> *If, on the contrary, the State wishes… to provide employment to all the workers who seek it, not from its own hands and by its own resources, but to see to it that they always find work with private employers, it will inevitably be led to try to regulate industry… It will have to ensure that there is no unemployment, which means that it will have to see that workers are so distributed that they do not compete with each other, that it will have to regulate wages, slow down production at one time and speed it up at another, in a word, that it will have to become the great and only organiser of labour… What do we see?   Socialism.*[22]

Standing argues that in the twentieth century, the international debate on the right to work has been shaped by, inter alia, *paternalism, the Great Depression, the emergence of Keynesianism and, in paradoxical ways, by the existence of communist states.*[23]   In the context of the conference at which this paper is presented, it is interesting to note that Standing places *Laborem Exercens* in the paternalism tradition. He claims that in Centesimus Annus, issued ten years later Pope John Paul II "*was more circumspect… It supported labour market policies, but undercut the right to work by concluding that 'the state could not directly ensure the right to work of all its citizens unless it controlled every aspect of economic life and restricted the free initiative of individuals'*[24].[25]

The comments of De Tocqueville and Standing are focused on the right to work being understood as meaning the right to employment for all.   We don't believe that full employment is likely anytime soon.   We do, however, believe that everyone can have access to work.

Reflecting on a large body of literature and the historical developments of our time we believe that every person has the right of access to the means of sustenance, and the right to contribute to the development of both self and society. Whatever contributes to providing this sustenance or to the development of self, family and society is work. Paid employment is not the only means of providing a person with sustenance and access to development. There are other possible mechanisms for distributing income and facilitating development. The need to explore these mechanisms is urgent since society has an obligation to structure itself in a way that guarantees every person access to sustenance and the opportunity to contribute to the development of self and society.   In this way we believe everyone has the right to work.

The challenges to society in this situation are substantial.   In particular society needs to structure itself so that everyone has access to meaningful work and has access to sufficient income to live life with dignity.   If paid employment is not available to large numbers of people, how can society meet the requirement that it structure itself so that everyone has access to meaningful work?   If people do not have access to the income that comes from paid employment, how can society structure itself so that everyone has sufficient income to live life with dignity?   These are the questions we address in the remainder of this paper.   Obviously, in a paper of this length, we cannot provide full comprehensive answers to either question.   We restrict our commentary to practical work done.   We will, however, sketch some aspects of an answer to each of the questions based on two pieces of our own practical work in this area.

3. HOW there can be meaningful work and adequate income for all in a world of rapid change.

3.1. Work - the How?

We have been arguing that work is important for people and all should have access to work.   We have also outlined why this is the case.   We now look at ways in which work could be available for everyone, particularly where paid employment is not available to everyone seeking a job.   We focus especially on a pilot programme that we developed and ran in the period 1994-97 which was a response to a very high unemployment situation in Ireland.

3.1.1. Developing a wider understanding of work and acknowledging its value

The first and most important priority is to challenge the false assumptions that underpin the dominant culture that informs both public opinion and the policy making process at present in much of the world.   One such assumption, we have already highlighted, is that work and a job are identical.   When questioned closely people may disagree with this equation, but when asked what work they do, they invariably understand the question to refer to the job they have or do not have. This equation needs to be broken. Working and having a job are not the same thing.   This is one of the most important truths that needs to be constantly repeated today.

A great many people work very hard even though they do not have a job.   One has only to think of a mother with children who is fully occupied as a homemaker or the person who is the 'dynamo' of some local organisation. These people work very hard but the work they do is not 'employment'.   It is critical that society broaden its understanding of work.   It is crucial to recognise that everyone has a right to work but that work and a job is not the same thing.   Our support for the introduction of a Basic Income system (to which we shall return later in this paper) comes, in part, from a belief that all work should be recognised and supported.

Another assumption that needs to be challenged is the one that says that the honourable way to contribute to and participate in society today is through a job. We believe that a monetary value should be put on the work done by the adult population that is not paid employment.   This work makes a huge contribution to the life of society yet goes unrecognised for the most part because it is not 'counted' in the calculation of Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is one of the reasons we support the development of 'shadow' national accounts that include the value of such work done in the society (as well as including the real costs of environmental damage etc.).

Since 2001 has been designated as the **UN International Year of Volunteers** it is appropriate that we also put a special focus on the work done by volunteers.   The Irish Government's White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity defines volunteering as *"the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes"*[26]. It goes on to point out that volunteering benefits society as a whole, it benefits individual communities and the volunteers who offer their services.

The White Paper situates this discussion in a wider context that it calls 're-thinking our vision'.   In this context it goes on state that:

> *There is a need to create a more participatory democracy where active citizenship is fostered. In such a society the ability of the Community and Voluntary sector to provide channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens is fundamental. Both formal, structured voluntary activity and informal volunteering are essential in this regard.*[27]

Volunteering has played a very significant role in the development of many societies. It is a 'glue' that has connected people and developed community identity and vibrancy. Volunteering supports individuals and families in creative and personal ways that are very difficult to replace. As the White Paper says: "A key determinant of the health of society is the degree to which individuals are prepared to come forward to give of their own time on a voluntary basis"[28].   Volunteering is a form of work that is not recognised adequately, especially in a modern world which *appears* to have a shortage of work for people.

One of the by-products of the emergence of more affluent societies in some parts of the world is the reduced involvement in volunteering. This is especially pronounced among young people.   We welcome the UN initiative in highlighting the importance of volunteering and we believe that volunteering should be fostered and supported.

3.1.2. **Towards active labour market policies that respect human dignity**

Within the range of traditional approaches to ensuring people have meaningful work there are many that should be supported and strengthened.   The relative importance of any of these varies with the situation in which a nation or region finds itself.

There has been an ongoing emphasis on creating new employment and this we welcome as long as the jobs created have reasonable pay rates and are not damaging to people, community, society or the environment. Much of the employment being

created across the world at present does not fit these conditions. However, a great deal has been written on this issue and we will not address it here.

There has also been an ongoing emphasis on preparing and enabling unemployed people to access market-place jobs. This we welcome, as well. Programmes in this area should focus on areas such as

♦ Providing quality education and training, retraining and up-skilling;

♦ Providing opportunities for unemployed people to gain work place experience.

♦ Developing services to enable every unemployed person to access opportunities that exist to take up employment or other forms of work, as appropriate.

♦ Resourcing the social economy (to which we shall return later in this paper).

♦ Including those who may find it difficult to access these services or opportunities, e.g. refugees, asylum seekers etc.

♦ Promoting sustainability at personal, family, community, social and environmental levels.

3.1.3. The story of a pilot project - The Part-Time Job Opportunities Programme (Ireland).[29]

There is one area to which we wish to draw special attention. This is the area of creating meaningful work for unemployed people in the social economy. The authors have been Directors of CORI Justice Commission for almost two decades.   We piloted a programme focusing on this area in the period 1994-97.   In the following pages we outline the story of that programme.   Hopefully it will be of value to readers here as it documents a concrete attempt to address the question: how can meaningful work be made available to people seeking it in a high-unemployment society?

3.1.3.1.   Socio-economic Context

Ireland in September 1993 had a large and growing unemployment problem. 297,958 people were registered as unemployed[30] and of these a high percentage were long-term unemployed. This problem had been developing over several years.

In 1983 there were 1,124,000 employed in Ireland, but by 1989, this had fallen to 1,090,000, a decrease of 34,000[31]. By 1993 this downward trend had been reversed with 1,148,000 employed. This, however, as an increase of only 24,000 on the number of people employed ten years previously.

Moreover the numbers of people unemployed for more than one year rose from 32,180 in 1980 to 111,000 in 1987. By 1990 it stood at 100,266, or 44.9% of the total number of unemployed people. In 1997 this had risen to 125,000 (on ILO basis)[32.] The prospects of employment for unemployed people generally, but particularly for long-term unemployed people, were poor.

CORI Justice Commission through its social policy conferences, analysis of successive government budgets, and publications has consistently over many years called for policy makers to look seriously at the changing world of work. In a submission to the Dail and Seanad (the two Houses of the Irish Parliament) on aspects

of the 1991 budget published by the Justice Commission, CORI stated:

> *Paid employment is at the core of social organisation in our western world. It is the main means through which large numbers of people receive their disposable incomes. The majority of people organise their days, their years, their lives around their own or other people's employment. To a great extent it defines how people participate in many decision-making processes. It has a major impact on people's status and on their self-concept.[33]*

In the light of high unemployment figures, and the likelihood that many would be likely to remain excluded from paid employment for the foreseeable future, CORI called for six changes at macro policy level. These involved

- recognition that people have a right to work;
- recognition that working and having a job are not necessarily the same;
- acceptance that unemployed people should not be forced to spend their lives doing nothing when jobs do not exist (as a condition of receiving their social welfare payments;
- recognition that not all jobs are humanising;
- acceptance that every person should have access to a guaranteed basic income;
- not linking a person's status to one's job or income.

This constituted recognition by CORI that in the new world of work, the very meaning of work would have to change. The alternative to this would be poverty and exclusion from society of those excluded from jobs.

Government initiatives to address unemployment in 1993 were geared towards making unemployed people 'employment ready", i.e. they were "integration" measures. These mainly set out to involve unemployed people on work schemes, such as the Social Employment Scheme (SES), to help them to get a job.

Under these schemes, unemployed people were given work experience for one year, working nineteen and a half hours per week, working for statutory agencies and community or voluntary groups. The objective was to give unemployed people an experience of employment so that they could more easily go out and source mainstream employment. Participants were paid a set weekly rate, consisting of the amount they were entitled to on unemployment assistance plus £18 per week. Payment was at the same level and for the same duration, irrespective of the nature of the work done, which was in the main manual work.

At the end of a year on a work scheme, unemployed people who had not obtained mainstream employment, were obliged to leave the scheme for at least twelve months. As the majority of unemployed people did not succeed in getting mainstream jobs via this route, they tended to return every alternate year to another scheme.

In 1993 Tom Ronayne and Eoin Devereux carried out a study of the Social Employment Scheme in Limerick for the Paul Partnership[34]. This report found the SES to have a limited impact as a labour market intervention measure. The report's states:

> *Only a minority of participants get work following participation on the SES; secondly, even fewer attribute having secured employment directly to participation on the scheme… The lack of progression is primarily*

> *attributable to the (mistaken) assumption at the heart of the SES that what the long-term unemployed require to maintain their employability are short periods of work.*

In 1994, the successor to the SES, Community Employment, was introduced by FAS, (an Agency of the Irish Government) but while this introduced training for participants; it still remained focused on integration of the participant into the labour force.

3.1.3.2.   Underlying model or framework of society

As we noted already the underlying model or framework which underpinned and informed the policy on which the SES and later Community Employment were based, saw meaningful work and adequate income being provided to all through the provision of full-time jobs within the market economy. These would be available for all who seek them, with reasonable wages paid for these jobs, and people's income being complemented by adequate social insurance, thus ensuring the elimination of poverty and the provision for all of a meaningful role in society.

In other words this framework was based on the assumption that the market economy alone could and would provide sufficient jobs for everyone who wanted them. All that was needed to achieve this was getting the economic indicators right, and resolving the barriers to employment. While CORI was supportive of all measures, which sought to create full-time jobs in the market economy, it did not believe that efforts should be confined to the market arena.   At that time the market arena was failing to provide anything close to sufficient jobs to create a full employment situation in Ireland. On the other hand CORI believed that everyone had a right to work. Therefore CORI challenged government and society to develop a situation where everyone has access to meaningful work.

CORI argued that for the foreseeable future there would not be full-time jobs, in the conventional sense, available for everyone seeking them, but that new and imaginative approaches would be required if the right of every individual to contribute to his/her own community or the wider society, in a meaningful way, was to be recognised and implemented.

(While Ireland's burgeoning economy did substantially reduce unemployment towards the end of the decade this a most unusual situation.   Very few countries have been successful in doing this.   Ireland achieved it through a range of fairly unique circumstances that are not expected to be repeatable on the same scale in most other countries in the world.)

Another important point highlighted by CORI Justice Commission was that there was a vast quantity of socially useful and important work which was required to be done by local communities, voluntary and statutory bodies. Such work was vital to the wellbeing of individuals and groups within society and to society as a whole. It made up what people understood as the social economy, in part or in whole. It included such important work as care of the elderly, care of the young, the development of arts and sport, and the development of local communities, care of the environment, heritage awareness, and tourism development. Much of this work was not being done or was only being partly done. We felt that the money being spent on paying social welfare to unemployed people could be used more creatively and with a greater respect for human dignity.

CORI's proposal was based on the conviction that it was possible to create real and meaningful part-time jobs for unemployed people doing this much-needed work. CORI believed that these jobs should be paid at the 'going rate for the job', have the working conditions that were seen as good practice within the market economy, and be ongoing. In this way the employment created would enhance the dignity of those employed, while at the same time fulfilling real social needs within the communities where the jobs were created.

CORI Justice Commission lobbied Government, encouraging Government to introduce a pilot programme that would test whether its hypothesis was viable.

In his Budget speech of January 1994 the then Minister for Finance, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D. announced that 1,000 places of the new Community Employment Programme would be allocated to '*pilot a programme based on the CORI concept'*. He further indicated that the Department of Enterprise and Employment would be responsible for administering the programme and that CORI together with the Department would '*design, implement, monitor and evaluate the programme'*.

3.1.3.3.   Ethos of the Programme

In 1993, unemployed people who depended on social welfare were forced to contend with three major problems. Firstly they received an income which was insufficient to enable them to live life with basic dignity. Secondly they were forced to remain idle as a condition of receiving social welfare in order to demonstrate their availability for a job even though there were no jobs available that they could access. And thirdly, as a result of their non-involvement and inadequate income they were cut off from the mainstream of society and alienated. Indeed in some cases, where certain geographical areas had a high incidence of unemployment, whole communities experienced this marginalisation and alienation.

CORI believes that every person has a right to work. It also believes as outlined already that the nature of work is changing. In the light of this change, society must look again at the issue of unemployment. We can no longer rely on market forces alone to provide meaningful work for everyone. Nor can we accept a society where significant numbers of people do not have the opportunity to contribute to society in a meaningful way and are destined therefore to become marginalised and excluded.

The CORI initiative was born out of a vision which

- understands work as any activity which contributes to the development of the person, the family, the community or the wider society;
- distinguishes between work and a job;
- envisages more flexible job patterns, e.g. job-sharing, flexitime, shorter working days, reduced overtime, v-time, and so forth;
- acknowledges the many thousands of hours of socially useful work which are currently ignored by our economic system, particularly in the caring, nurturing, cultural, artistic and sporting areas;
- recognises that everyone has some skills and is willing to develop those skills and other skills if given the right environment;
- believes that no society can afford to refuse the gifts and skills of its people through structural unemployment;
- affirms that people do not necessarily need a job for thirty-nine hours per

week for forty years to enjoy a meaningful life, while recognising that
people's meaning comes from their relationships and work, both paid and
unpaid.

Underpinning this vision is a belief that every person has a right to an income, which
allows him/her to live with dignity.

3.1.3.4.   The Proposal

The Part-Time Job Opportunities Programme was first proposed to government by the
Justice Office of the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) in September 1993.
The proposal was made in a paper entitled "Work, Jobs and Income: Towards a New
Paradigm".

The proposal made to government was as follows.

**That government initiate a programme whereby unemployed people could be
employed on a part-time basis**

- **voluntarily**

- **by local authorities, health boards, education authorities, voluntary or
  community organisations or groups**

- **doing work of public or social value which is not being done or is only partly
  being done at present**

- **at 'the going rate for the job'**

- **for as many hours as would give them a net income equivalent to what they
  were receiving in unemployment assistance.**

- **Payment for an additional number of hours would be provided to ensure an
  increase in the income of each person taking a position on the programme.**

- **Relevant education and training would be provided.**

- **The money paid to the person filling a new position would be reallocated to
  the employing organisation by the Department for Social Welfare.**

- **The person taking up the new position would lose none of his/her other social
  welfare entitlements.**

- **Once the required number of hours had been worked then the person would
  be free to do whatever he/she wished for the remainder of the week.**

- **If a person received further income from another job then this would be
  assessed for tax purposes in the normal way.**

- **To counteract the disincentive effect which might face a person in a large
  family in receipt of relatively high social welfare payments we suggest that a
  maximum number of hours could be agreed beyond which participants in
  this programme would receive the balance of their new social welfare
  payments without being required to work additional hours.**

3.1.3.4.   Voluntary Nature of the Programme

It was of vital importance to CORI that the programme should be totally voluntary from the point of view of both workers and employers. In no way could the programme have the compulsory characteristics of "workfare".

From the viewpoint of the worker, he/she must freely choose to come on the programme, and must be free to leave it if he/she so chose, subject only to normal requirements with regard to notice to the employer.

From the point of view of the employer, there must be free choice in selecting workers from among those eligible for the programme. The employer should also be free to select the number of workers required. This ensures that the work offered was real. In the State run schemes employers were compelled to take on a set number of workers. This often resulted in "make work" activities, which was insulting to workers and a burden to employers.

To ensure that these requirements were met, CORI insisted that

- positions should be advertised publicly, through local media, or in any other way in which they could be announced in the local community;
- workers should be interviewed for positions;
- leaving a particular project did not prejudice a worker seeking to participate in another scheme or training programme;
- a worker who left a project could return without penalty to the live register;
- employers were not pressurised to take more workers than they needed;
- small projects were as welcome as larger projects with their own project supervisor;
- employers could replace workers immediately they left the programme.

3.1.3.5.   Work Undertaken

In designing the programme, CORI identified large amounts of work, which voluntary organisations or in local communities needed to be done. This work is not done in the private economy, because while there is considerable demand for it, and the work is intrinsically valuable, it may not command a value in financial terms. For example, caring for senior citizens without independent means, providing sports facilities for young people in disadvantaged areas, encouraging tourism in rural areas, are all activities of undoubted value within their local areas, but are of no commercial value within the market economy. These activities all fall within what is now known as the 'social economy'.

In addition to this, there was work that could be provided by statutory organisations, such as local authorities, schools and health boards. In this instance the work done consisted of work which, while valuable in itself, cannot, because of budgetary

constraints, be funded from within the national budget by the employment of mainstream staff. Examples of this work were the provision of teachers' assistants within schools, the development of art therapy in hospitals, the development of some special amenity areas by the local authorities, the provision of assistant librarians so that libraries could extend their hours of service to local communities.

CORI also designed the programme to provide jobs of an ongoing nature. Workers would not be required to leave the programme after a fixed period determined in advance. Rather, if they wished, they could continue on the programme for as long as the employing organisation had suitable work for them to do, and chose to avail of the programme in order to have it done.

3.1.3.6.   The Going Rate for the Job

The identification of the going hourly rate for the job was a new venture in this area. It was an obvious consequence of CORI's strategy to value all work and to ensure workers felt their skills and effort were justly rewarded. Since it was of paramount importance that the rate be equitable and fair, CORI liased with the trade unions, professional bodies, employment agencies and personnel departments in an effort to arrive at a reasonable hourly rate. In addition, in order to reflect incremental scales in many areas of employment, most rates were set at two levels, a lower and a higher level, within which employers were free to negotiate the actual rate paid. Employers also had the option of setting a rate at the lower end of the scale set, and increasing this as employees gained in skills and expertise in subsequent years.

3.1.3.7.   Education and Training

The education and training element of the programme was a unique achievement in terms of its objectives, its methodology and its outcomes. In effect, 1000 unemployed people from varying geographic areas were offered training and education which over 95% of them accepted. The education and training was overseen by a third-level college, but the content was designed by the participants themselves and delivered on an ongoing basis over three years. At the conclusion of the programme, participants were offered an evaluation process, in which they participated. Those who completed this process had the portfolio of their achievements certified by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Workers were facilitated in compiling their own portfolios. This portfolio included not only the education and training received and the exams passed, it also included the work done and the projects and initiatives undertaken during the years of the programme. Written work was only part of the assessments. Participants, especially those who might have difficulty with written communications were encouraged and facilitated in using audio, video, photography and art.

3.1.3.8.   Operation of the Programme

One thousand people were employed on the programme in six pilot areas. Statistics from the programme show that 502 participants moved from the programme into full or part time employment or education. Thus 1,500 workers benefited from the programme over the three-year period of the pilot phase.

3.1.3.9.   Outcomes of the Programme

For the workers involved. The vast majority of the workers on the programme saw their work as meaningful and important. They saw it as a real job. The going rate for the job, the ongoing nature of the work, and the fact that these jobs were contract based and perceived by employers and the local community to be real and significant, supported this view.

Many workers were able to use the programme to take up other part-time work in their free time. For some this led to their leaving the programme for full-time employment.

All the research and evaluations carried out on the programme show that the 'going rate for the job' was a key element in the success of the programme. It indicated to participants that they had a real job, with wages set by the trade unions. This perception was linked to an increased sense of self worth and esteem. This in turn had a dramatic effect on their motivation, which was palpable and was commented on by employers.

For the employing organisations. The benefits of the programme extended to the employing organisations and the local community. For these organisations, the fact that workers see their work as valued, contributes to their having a committed workforce. Also the longer duration of the programme provided continuity of personnel.

For the local community. The local community benefited greatly from the programme. A range of services was provided. Important too was the beneficial effect to the community of having numbers of people in employment. A good example was one small village of about 900 people where 16 people were employed on a project which benefited all aspects of community life – sporting, cultural, educational and local development.

For the national level. The programme had significant impact at national level. In 1995 the Irish Government set up a Task Force on Long-Term Unemployment. Influenced by the CORI programme the Task Force proposed that direct employment opportunities sponsored by the state had two distinct objectives: a) integration and b) state sponsored employment. This was the first official recognition (outside the pilot programme), that the state could and should have a role in directly creating employment opportunities for unemployed people.

In December 1996 a new national agreement was signed by the Irish Government and the Social Partners. This agreement included a commitment to create an additional 10,000 full or part-time jobs, having the characteristics of the Part-Time Job Opportunities Programme, over the three-year period of the agreement.

For the European level.   Several organisations and Governments from various EU countries were interested in the pilot programme's development. We tried to ensure that links were built between programme participants and people in other EU countries.   As a result a number of cross border projects were initiated focusing on the response to unemployment and models of good practice.

3.1.3.10.   Mainstreaming of the programme.

In April 1997 the Minister for Enterprise and Employment announced the mainstreaming of the CORI programme. In doing this the Minister acknowledged that a number of innovations piloted in the programme had already been mainstreamed.[35] The pilot programme's characteristics were not all maintained by Government but its main characteristics were and the mainstreamed programme flourished in the following years.   Many of its characteristics were also incorporated into other Government initiatives in this area.

3.1.4.   The lessons of this pilot project

This pilot programme showed that
♦ There is substantial scope for identifying and developing meaningful work.
♦ Unemployed people could and would do this work if they were given the opportunity.
♦ The emphasis on human dignity and human respect is crucially important in any development in this area.
♦ Involvement in meaningful work had a very positive impact on the individual participants, on their families and on their communities.
♦ A little creativity can provide solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems.
♦ The social economy has enormous potential (cf below).
♦ Sustainability can be supported in a variety of creative ways.

3.1.5.   Developing the social economy - the Irish experience

The development of the social economy is one mechanism that societies can use to meet their responsibilities in this regard. There has been much discussion on the social economy in the member states of the EU. It is a concept that is very much in the developmental stage in Ireland. In the late eighties and early nineties CORI had been advocating that much work needed to be done despite the fact that unemployment was high. Some of this was work that could be seen as part of the social economy. It was within this context that the Part-Time Job Opportunities Programme was developed and implemented.

In 1998 a working group in Ireland composed of Government and Social Partners (Business, Trade Unions, Farmers and the Community and Voluntary sector) of which Sean Healy of CORI Justice Commission was a member, produced a report on the social economy.   This report described the social economy as follows:
> '*The distinguishing features of the social economy might be defined broadly as:*
> •*That part of the economy between the private and public sectors, which engages in economic activity in order to meet social objectives*'.

The working group went on to focus on a sub-set of the social economy in its report. The working group described this sub-set as having
> …*all or some of the following characteristics:*

- *ownership within a community or community of interest, responding to market demand, regardless of source of income;*
- *focus on the economic and social development of a community or community of interest.*
- *Operation benefiting the community and individual members;*
- *Providing for employment experience and employment opportunities which is sustainable, but which might nonetheless be dependent on state support.*

As a general rule a social economy enterprise has a traded income with the profits or receipts of activity invested in the viability of the operation rather than accruing to shareholders. Maximising employment opportunities within the community would be an important end of the operation. While a social economy enterprise is entrepreneurial in that it functions in the marketplace and has a traded income, some or all of that income can come in the form of public subsidies for providing services or employment opportunities and experience for disadvantaged groups.

The Working Group used the following typology of social economy enterprise, which breaks the social economy down into the following subsets:
- *Community business, ultimately financed from trading income alone*
- *Deficit demand social enterprises, where the demand for particular goods and services within a community is not matched by resources to pay for these due to disadvantage or low density of population*
- *Enterprises based on public sector contracts, which deals with the potential for subcontracting public sector expenditure in disadvantaged areas and communities to local social economy enterprises* [36].

While we are not in a position to develop the issue of the social economy in this paper we believe that it does provide a major area of potential for the future. The social economy enterprise described by the Irish working group is just one of a vast range of possibilities that exist and would benefit from further scrutiny. This whole area is especially important in the context of moving towards a situation where other meaningful work, besides paid employment, is recognised and valued by the wider society. It also has a significant role to play in promoting sustainable development.

3.2. Income - the How?

3.2.1. Recognising the importance of income in developing and protecting human dignity

Few people would disagree that the resources of the planet are for the use of all people, not just the present generation but also generations still to come. In Old Testament times, these resources were closely tied to land and water. A complex system of laws about the Sabbatical and Jubilee years (Lev. 25:1-22, Deut 15: 1-18) were devised to ensure, on the one hand, that no person could be disinherited, and on the other, that land and debts could not be accumulated or the earth exploited.

In more recent times, Pope Paul VI said '*private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditional right. No one is justified in keeping for his/her*

exclusive use what is not needed when others lack necessities…The right to property must never be exercised to the detriment of the common good[37]. In Laborem Exercens Pope John Paul II has developed the understanding of ownership, especially in regard to the ownership of the means of production. One of the major contributors to the generation of wealth is technology. The technology we have today is the product of the work of many people through many generations. Through the laws of patenting and exploration a very small group of people have claimed legal rights to a large portion of the world's wealth. Pope John Paul II questions the morality of these structures. He says *'if it is true that capital as the whole of the means of production is at the same time the product of the work of generations, it is equally true that capital is being unceasingly created through the work done with the help of all these means of production'.* Therefore no one can claim exclusive rights over the means of production. Rather that right *'is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone'*[38]

Since everyone has a right to a proportion of the goods of the country, society has an obligation to develop structures that ensure a just distribution of these goods. At this point in history it seems that society is faced with two responsibilities regarding economic resources:
♦ firstly, that each person has sufficient to access the good life, and
♦ secondly, since the earth's resources are finite and we know that more is not necessarily better, it is time that society faced the question of putting a limit to the wealth that any person or corporate body can accumulate.

Interdependence, mutuality, solidarity, connectedness are words which are used loosely today to express a consciousness which is very Christian. All of creation is seen as a unit which is dynamic, each part is related to every other part, depends on it in some way and can affect it. When we focus on the human family this means that each person depends on others, initially for life itself and subsequently for the resources and relationships needed to grow and develop. To ensure that the connectedness of the web of life is maintained, each person is meant to reach out to support others in ways that are appropriate for their growth and in harmony with the rest of creation. This thinking respects the dignity of the person while recognising that the person can only achieve their potential in right relationships with others and the environment. All of this implies the need for appropriate structures and infrastructures. In particular, we advocate that a structure, which would guarantee an adequate income to everyone, would be accepted as a basic requirement.

3.2.2. The need for an alternative to the present system

The dominant paradigm tells us that people should have access to income through payment for the job they do or through a social welfare / social security system that protects those who are young/poor/old/sick etc. and ensures they are not left in poverty.   The main problem with this paradigm is that it does not deliver on its claims.   Unemployment is widespread.   There are no jobs for a great many people.   Social welfare/security systems have patently failed to eliminate poverty.   Many people who do have jobs receive wages that are so low that they remain in poverty.   In a rapidly changing world, an alternative approach is required, one that will ensure that people receive sufficient income to live life with basic human dignity.

Basic Income is such a system. We have for many years argued for the introduction of such a Basic Income system.   In our view it is the alternative approach most likely to

deliver on the basic requirement for any alternative system i.e. that it ensures people will receive sufficient income to live life with basic human dignity.   We offer our proposals as a contribution to the public debate we believe is urgently required around the key issue of poverty and income distribution.

The following paragraphs outline what such a system might look like and report on developments in the Irish context concerning proposals for the introduction of such a system.

3.2.2.1.   What is Basic Income?

Basic Income is usually defined as an income paid unconditionally to everyone on an individual basis, without any means test or work requirement.   In a Basic Income system every person receives a weekly tax-free payment from the Exchequer and all other personal income is taxed.   For a person who is unemployed the basic income payment replaces income from social welfare/social security.   For a person who is employed the basic income payment replaces the tax-free allowance or tax credit contained in the income tax system.

Basic income is a form of minimum income guarantee that avoids many of the negative side effects inherent in social welfare/security payments. A basic income differs from other forms of income support in that:

- it is paid to individuals rather than households
- it is paid irrespective of any income from other sources
- it is paid without conditions
- it is always tax-free.

3.2.2.2.   Why a Basic Income

Many arguments have been made in favour of introducing a Basic Income system.[39] Among these are arguments focusing on liberty and equality, efficiency and community, common ownership of the earth and equal sharing in the benefits of technical progress, the flexibility of the labour market and the dignity of the poor. Arguments have also been made focusing on the need to tackle unemployment and inhumane working conditions, on the desertification of the countryside and inter-regional inequalities, on the viability of co-operatives and the promotion of adult education. There are arguments from the perspective of *liberty* that can be traced back to Thomas Paine.   There are arguments from an *egalitarian* perspective that have been enunciated by people such as John Baker.[40]   There are *communitarian* arguments for Basic Income that have been summarised by Bill Jordan.[41] People such as Hermione Parker[42] and Samuel Brittan[43] have also made strong arguments for Basic Income on the grounds of *efficiency*.   For those interested in the philosophical questions of why a Basic Income should be introduced, Philippe Van Parijs has produced a very comprehensive analysis that is well worth reading.[44]   For those interested in the economic arguments for a basic income Charles Clark has produced a well argued and interesting analysis.[45]   For those who wish to focus on the practical implementation of a basic income system the present Charles Clark and John Healy have produced a detailed study illustrating how this can be done.[46]   For those

interested in these various issues and their application to the broader context of Government's annual budget and the various aspects of Government policy the present authors have produced a number of studies that may be of interest.[47]

We believe there are a wide range of arguments why a Basic Income system is the best alternative to the present failed system and should be supported and introduced. Among these are the following:

- It is work and employment friendly
- It eliminates poverty traps and unemployment traps
- It promotes equity and ensures that everyone receives at least the poverty level of income
- It spreads the burden of taxation more equitably
- It treats men and women equally
- It is simple and transparent
- It is efficient in labour-market terms
- It rewards types of work in the social economy that the market economy often ignores, e.g. household work, child-rearing, etc
- It facilitates further education and training in the labour force
- It faces up to the changes in the global economy

3.2.3. Developing a Basic Income distribution system - the Irish experience

In the late 1970s empirical work was done for Ireland's National Economic and Social Council on the issue of Basic Income. From 1987 onwards two approaches to basic income have been developed in Ireland. The first of these preserved key parts of the current income tax and social welfare systems. The second approach substituted basic income for the existing tax and welfare systems and some other Government spending. The authors are identified with the latter approach. We do not intend going into all the details of these approaches here. For those who are interested Sean Ward has produced a very good and succinct outline of developments in Ireland up to 1998 which is well worth reading.[48]

In Ireland, since 1987, Government has negotiated with employers, trade unions and farmers' organisations to develop three-year national plans. In 1996 an additional pillar was added to this partnership process representing the voluntary and community sector. CORI Justice Commission is one of the organisations that is now recognised as a full social partner in this new pillar. In the course of the negotiations for the new programme called Partnership 2000 *(covering 1997 - 9)*, CORI was successful in getting agreement from the other social partners to include a section on Basic Income which reads as follows:

> "Further independent appraisal of the concept of introducing a Basic Income for all citizens will be undertaken, taking into account the work of the ESRI, CORI and the Expert Group on the Integration of Tax and Social Welfare and international research. A broadly based steering group will oversee the study".

A working group was established to implement this commitment, CORI was part of this working group. The working group decided to divide its work into two phases. Phase one examines the tax rate needed to fund Basic Income and the distributional implications of introducing Basic Income with this tax rate. Phase two looks at the dynamic effects of the proposal, including its effects on employment, effects on economic growth, short and long-term budgetary implications and the gender dimensions of all of these. These studies have been completed and published by Government.

These studies found that a Basic Income system would have a substantial impact on the distribution of income in Ireland. Compared with the present tax and welfare system it would improve the income of 70% of households in the bottom four deciles (i.e. the four tenths of the population with lowest incomes).   It would also raise half of the individuals that would be below the 40% poverty line under 'conventional' options above this poverty line.

According to these studies, these impacts would be achieved without any resources additional to those available to 'conventional' options. CORI has welcomed the fact that the P2000 Working Group Report vindicates CORI Justice Commission's claims that a Basic Income system would have a far more positive impact on reducing poverty than the present tax and welfare systems.

In the build up to the 1997 Irish general election CORI canvassed all political parties to include a commitment on Basic Income within their election manifestos.   The incoming Government (Fianna Fail / Progressive Democrats coalition) made a commitment to introduce a Green Paper on Basic Income within two years. This was a further breakthrough as it would ensure that the work being done on Basic Income would be considered within the official policy making process of Government and that the results would be published for public consideration.

The normal procedure in Ireland is that a Green Paper is followed by a discussion which, in turn, is followed by a White Paper outlining what Government proposes to do which then forms the basis for a Bill which goes before Parliament.

Consequently, we feel that CORI's activities on this issue of Basic Income are moving towards a situation of Government addressing the Basic Income issue at a coherent, policy making level. Because of the late completion of the working group's studies, publication of the Green Paper has been delayed. Two months ago the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) assured us in writing that the promised Green Paper on Basic Income would be published before the end of 2001.

Basic Income provides a substantial challenge to the income distribution system promoted by the dominant paradigm.   It is fairer, more efficient and has a far greater impact on reducing poverty.   If supporters of the dominant paradigm reject a Basic Income approach, they are left with a serious challenge - to find an income distribution system that ensures every man, woman and child has sufficient income to live life with basic human dignity.

4. **Conclusion**

In this paper we have tried to address questions that are critically important for the twenty first century i.e. why and how there can be work for all in a rapidly changing world.   In doing this we have argued for an alternative paradigm to underpin the approach to issues of work and income distribution. We believe such an alternative is urgently required if the human dignity of all people is to be respected and assured. It is also required if we are to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability within this finite world. We also believe such an alternative would be far closer to the fundamental tenets of Catholic social teaching.

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[1] Rifkin, Jeremy (1995) *End of Work: The Decline of the Global labour Force and the Dawn of the post-Market Era.* New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons. p3

[2] ibid. P. p.6

[3] Standing, Guy, 1999, *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice,* London, Macmillan Press, p.3

[4] ibid. pp. 3-10

[5] Pope John Paul II, Laborum Exercens No. 9

[6] Fromm, Eric, 1956, *The Sane Society,* London: Routledge & Keegan Paul. p.177

[7] Fiorenza, F.S., 1980, *Religious Beliefs and Praxis: Reflections on Catholic Theological Views of Work, Concilium,* Vol.131, Work and Religion, p.93

[8] Freund, Julien, 1980, *Work and Religion according to Max Weber,* Concilium, Vol. 131, Work and Religion, p.24

[9] Fromm, Erich, Op. cit., p. 180

[10] Freund, Julie, Op. Cit., p. 25.

[11] Romans 8:18-27

[12] Vacek, E.C. (1987), Work, in J.A. Komonchak et al (eds), *New Dictionary of Theology*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, p. 1103.

[13] Pope John Paul II, Op. cit. No. 10.

[14] Schumacher, E.F., 1980, *Good Work,* London: Abacus, 1980, p.4

[15] Pope John Paul II, Op. Cit., No.10.

[16] Fiorenza, F.S., Op. Cit., p.93.

[17] Vacek, E.C., Op. Cit. P.1103

[18] Fiorenza, F. S., Op. Cit., p. 93.

[19] Pope John Paul II, Op. Cit., No. 27.

[20] Pope John Paul II, Op. Cit., No. 16.

[21] Ibid., Nos. 17, 18.

[22] De Tocqueville, A.   1848, *Discours sur le droit au travail*, Paris, Librairie L. Curmer, pp. 7-9, (Translation supplied in Standing, op. cit. p.12.)

[23] Standing, op. Cit. P. 12.

[24] Pope John Paul II, 1991, Centesimus Annus, Rome, The Vatican, p. 19.

[25] Standing, Op. Cit. P. 13.

[26] *Supporting Voluntary Activity: A White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the state and the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2000*, Dublin, Irish Government Publications, p. 29.

[27] Ibid. p.41.

[28] Ibid. p. 31.

[29] The authors wish to acknowledge the substantial work done by a large number of people to make this project possible.   In particular we wish to acknowledge the role of Yvonne Murphy who was responsible for the implementation of the programme throughout its pilot phase (1994-97) and played a key role in having the programme mainstreamed by Government in 1997/98.

[30] Live Register figures, Central Statistics Office, Dublin.

[31] Labour Force Survey, Central Statistics Office, Dublin.

[32] Ibid.

[33] CORI Justice Commission, 1990, *National Recovery - For Whom?,* Dublin, CORI Justice Commission.

[34] Ronayne, Tom and Eoin Devereux, 1993, *Labour Market Provision for the Long-Term Unemployed - the Social Employment Scheme* Limerick, The Paul Partnership

[35] *Part-Time Job Opportunities; Final Report 1994-1997.* Conference of Religious of Ireland.

[36] *Report of Partnership 2000 Social Economy Working Group,* 1998, Irish Government Publications.

[37] Pope Paul VI, *Populorem Progressio,* No. 23

[38] Pope John Paul II, Op. Cit. No. 14.

[39] For a good summary of the various arguments in favour of Basic Income cf. Sean Ward, *Basic Income,* in Sean Healy and Brigid Reynolds, (eds.), Social Policy in Ireland, Principles, Practice and Problems, 1988, Dublin, Oaktree Press.

[40] Baker, John (1992) An Egalitarian Case for Basic Income, in P. Van Parijs (ed). *Arguing for Basic Income,* London: Verso.

[41] Jordan, Bill, (1992), Basic Income and the Common Good, in Philippe Van Parijs, *Arguing for Basic Income,* London, Verso.

[42] Parker, Hermione (1989), *Instead of the Dole: An Enquiry into Integration of the Tax-Benefit Systems*, London: Routledge.

[43] Brittan, Samuel (1996), *Capitalism with a Human Face,* London: Fontana.

[44] Van Parijs, Philippe, (1992), Competing Justifications of Basic Income, in *Arguing for Basic Income,* London, Verso.

[45] Due for publication in late 2001 this work will analyse the criteria for progress designed by a number of different groups and test basic income against these criteria.   It will also provide an excellent critique of labour market policies from this perspective.

[46] Clark, Charles M.A. and John Healy, (1997), *Pathways to a Basic Income,* Dublin: CORI.

[47] These include the following publications which the present authors have either edited and written a chapter of, or written in full:
      (2001) Prosperity and Exclusion: Towards a New Social Contract
      (1998) (eds.) Social Policy in Ireland: Principles, Practice and Problems
      (1997) Surfing the Income Net
      (1996) (eds.) Progress, Values and Public Policy
      (1995) (eds.) An Adequate Income Guarantee for All - Desirability, Viability, Impact
      (1994) (eds.) Towards an Adequate Income for All
      (1993) (eds.) New Frontiers for Full Citizenship
      (1990) (eds.) Work, Jobs and Income: Towards a New Paradigm

[48] Ward, Sean, (1998) Basic Income, in Sean Healy and Brigid Reynolds (eds) *Social Policy in Ireland: Principles, Practice and Problems,* Dublin: Oaktree Press.