**Where are the Jobs?**

**Continuing**

BY FRED KAMMER, S.J.

The stock market is soaring to set new records. CEOs are taking home bundles of cash, stock options, and rich severance packages. Wall Street is handing out million dollar bonuses again. Congress and state legislatures seem to find no tax cut unpalatable. And big tech firms like Apple acquire smaller ones like Tumbler for a billion dollars. What is the matter with this wacky picture? Unemployment. The "official" unemployment rate for April 2013 was 7.5 percent, representing 11.7 million persons, of whom 4.4 million have been unemployed for at least six months. This does not include people who simply have given up looking for work or those working part-time who want to work full-time. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the total of "labor underutilization" at 14.5 percent, almost double the official unemployment rate.

We can understand the different kinds of "unemployment" by looking more closely at the statistics for the five Gulf South states in four categories used by BLS. The figures are drawn by BLS from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, augmented with other data, based on averages over the twelve months ending in March 2013.1 The four categories are:

- **Officially unemployed:** All jobless persons available for work who actively sought work in the past four weeks as a percent of the civilian labor force
- **Discouraged workers:** Persons not in the labor force who want and are available for work and have sought work in the past twelve months, but not in the past four weeks because they believe no jobs are available for them (hours cut back or unable to find a full-time job), as a percent of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers.
- **Marginally attached workers:** Includes discouraged workers whose reason for not seeking work in the past four weeks is other than their belief about availability of jobs for them, as a percent of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers.
- **Involuntary part-time workers:** Persons working less than 35-hours a week who want full-time employment but gave an economic reason for working part-time (hours cut back or unable to find a full-time job), as a percent of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers.

The table below reflects the cumulative effect of these four categories of workers in each locale. BLS notes that these measures of labor underutilization move together over time and across business cycles so that states with high official unemployment rates tend to have high rates of underemployed and underutilized workers, as well. Workers of color, of course, have higher rates of labor underutilization than white workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure of Labor Underutilization</th>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>Louisiana</th>
<th>Mississippi</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officially unemployed</strong></td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officially unemployed plus discouraged workers</strong></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officially unemployed, discouraged, and marginally attached workers</strong></td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officially unemployed, discouraged, marginally attached, and involuntary part-time workers</strong></td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church names solidarity as a core principle of Catholic social teaching.

Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more community of people. The acceleration of interdependence between persons and peoples needs to be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical/social plane, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale.2

Many associate the term "solidarity" with the writing of Blessed John Paul II, who developed the concept extensively. The term, however, was used by Vatican II in Gaudium et Spes in discussing universal interdependence and international relations, as well as the communal character of the human person taught by Jesus Christ, the community of believers that he establishes, and the ultimate solidarity to be "brought to perfection" at the end of time.3 In writing Famos in Terra during the Council, Blessed John XXIII called for an "active solidarity" that "cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human family."4 To develop the term "duty of solidarity," Pope John Paul II underscores the urgency of connecting action to justice.

For those guided by the principles of human dignity, justice, and the common good, the current situation demands that we "prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone."5 The refusal of our elected leaders to make this priority a reality—by stimulus spending, job training and re-training, it is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world in its economic, cultural, political, religious and social elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue," is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all.6

This solidarity takes concrete forms. Pope John Paul says, in personal decisions in decisions of government, in economic decisions, in public demonstrations by the poor themselves, in sacrifice of all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism; and in a variety of other concrete actions, both personal and structural. Solidarity, we are told by the Vatican, will require developing new forms of collaboration among the poor themselves, between the poor and the rich, among and between groups of workers, and between private and public institutions.7

ENDNOTES

2 Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, 1965, No. 32.
4 "The principle of social solidarity requires that abetting poverty will require fundamental changes in social and economic structures that perpetuate glaring inequalities and cut off millions of citizens from full participation in the economic and social life of the nation. The pressure of change should be that which brings together all citizens, whatever their economic status, into one community." National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All, 1986, No. 185.
5 Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 1987, No. 37.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., No. 18.
In Praise of Newcomers

As Noel Ignatiev explains in How the Irish Became White, when the newly arrived Irish were considered a threat to American society, they were told that they and blacks “need not apply.” The Irish learned that by joining in anti-black racism they could become white and gain economic ascendancy.

We devalue human life when we reduce human persons to units of economic production and categorize an entire group of people as “unlawful.” The danger is not only in how we treat newcomers in our midst. A greater danger is how racism and economic universalism treat human community and human, moral, practical, and spiritual commitments that bind us together as sacred and social beings.

In their now classic examination of American individualism, Habits of the Heart, Robert Bellah and colleagues warned us of the threat economic universalism poses to a good society. Habits of the Heart invited Americans to reflect on two contradictory senses of individualism. First, they celebrate the inherent dignity and sacredness of the human person. Second, they criticize the ways that American individualism makes the individual primary to society, and society an abstraction or derivative of the individual. This view of the individual as primary to reality opposes the biblical and religious traditions, which view both individuals and society as equally real and valuable. Indeed, like the biblical and religious social teaching, it celebrates the inherent dignity, sacredness, and social nature of the human person. The sacredness and society of the human person and the reality of interdependence means that we are all responsible for one another.

When we deny this theological, moral, and practical reality, we deny our humanity and that of our brothers and sisters before God.

No group of newcomers has ever created any kind of loss for American society. Every group has contributed to the growth and development of society in many ways that go well beyond cost-benefit analysis.

The federal government has contributed to the defense of the nation, helped build their local communities, and cared for their children so that future generations would enjoy levels of education, health care, and a quality of life that previous generations could only imagine.

We ought to praise newcomers and welcome their wisdom, cultures, and ways of life.

More important, perhaps, every group has taught us about our common vulnerability, our common need for one another, and the interdependence of the human family. When we recognize our common humanity in newcomers, there is possibility. Recognizing our common humanity, we may envision new possibilities of who we may become in hope and solidarity as the people of God.

ENDNOTES


3 See the inclusive list of mailers at the Immigration Policy Center website available online at www.immigrationpolicy.org/center/immigration-center-against-immigration-amnesty.html.


Unemployment and Other Woes

Unemployment is a terrible thing. It is bad enough when millions of people are unemployed, or underutilized. Reducing unemployment benefits to the longest unemployed, cutting food aid, reducing health coverage, and throwing away jobs, however, vividly embodies the old adage about “kicking a person when he is down.”

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## ENDNOTES


3 Ibid., p. 15, emphasis in original.


6 Ibid.


8 Center for Mississippi Health Policy, Medicaid Expansion: An Overview of National Impacts in Mississippi, November 2012, p. 6.


11 For example, see Mississippi, “State of Mississippi, National Quarter of the American 8, Second Quarter of 2013 Averages, April 26, 2013.”

In the Gulf States states, some estimates for job creation under PPACA include approximately 9,000 new jobs in Mississippi, 15,680 new jobs in Louisiana,24 and 3,500,000 new jobs in Texas.10