

## WARM UP

- 1** What is the reasoning behind the de-growth movement and what does it support?

## De-growth

# In Praise of Leisure

In 1930 John Maynard Keynes published an essay called *Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren* in which he imagined a world where, thanks to technological progress increasing production output, people would have to work less and less in order to satisfy their needs. He wrote ‘for the first time since his creation man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem – how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well.’

In recent years, interest and support for the idea of de-growth has grown rapidly. (1)  Opponents refer to the urgent need for economic recovery and growth in order to pay off government debts, bring down unemployment and climb out of this terrible depression. (2)

For this reason, we need to ask what wealth is for. The continuous pursuit of wealth is madness: (3)  Most of us agree that someone with three houses does not actually need a fourth house, however strongly he or she wants one. So, in theory, everyone is capable of understanding and limiting their wants to their needs. (4)  What could change this situation is more leisure. This does not mean being idle and hanging around all day doing nothing. It means being involved in an activity without an extrinsic end, where people are not motivated by money but by doing something well. It could be anything from an artist or musician to a teacher or scientist. This may be an idealisation, because rewards of some kind will always be a part of the equation, but we should follow our inclinations, be spontaneous and no longer see our actions as mechanical or driven solely by monetary gain.

Many parts of the developing world have yet to satisfy basic human and material needs and there growth must remain a priority. In the developed world the material conditions for a good life already exist – but are placed beyond our reach by the blind pursuit of growth. (5)  Instead we should aim at putting the good things of life – health, respect, friendship, leisure – within the reach of everyone.

Source: <http://chronicle.com/>

## ACTIVITIES

## READING COMPREHENSION

- 2** **BEC** Read the article and choose the best sentence to fill each gap. There is one extra sentence you do not need.
- a Making more and more money cannot be the purpose of private individuals nor society.
  - b In reality, our competitive, money-based economy pushes us all to desire more and more and more.
  - c Those in favour state the irreparable environmental damage caused by the pursuit of growth and the fact that it does not actually improve our happiness.
  - d In this way, maximising the efficient use of time will lose its importance.
  - e Economic growth should not be something to be aimed at.
  - f This is acceptable as a short-term economic policy, but we need to think about long-term policies for our future well-being.

## SPEAKING

- 3** Have a class debate on the following statement.

‘Rich industrialised countries have already surpassed the limit of sustainability and the only way for the planet to survive is through a policy of de-growth.’