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**Scientific Council for Government  
Policy**

**Summary**

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# **On social inequality**

**A policy-oriented exploration  
of distribution problems**

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**Report to the Council of Ministers  
of the Netherlands**

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## Summary

It is almost impossible to imagine a human society without problems of distribution. These problems are ubiquitous although they assume different forms. There are no solutions which satisfy everybody once and for all. Even if, at a certain moment, everybody would be convinced of the equity of a system of distribution, this situation would not last. In time, social change would make the justice of the distribution come up for discussion again. In addition, there is the question of the functionality of a system of distribution; what does it contribute to the proper functioning of a society. On this matter also opinions differ.

Government has always been involved in the process of distribution. Especially after World War II problems of distribution have constantly engaged the attention of the government. In the 1973 Government-Statement they were even given a centrale place in government policy. The Council has taken up distribution problems because they have a long term influence upon society. Their study can, moreover, contribute to scientifically based priorities and an integrated policy. Finally their study can result in proposals for further research into relevant aspects of distribution.

Fundamental as well as pragmatic considerations made for a selection of the following elements, whose distribution has been investigated: knowledge, material and immaterial income from paid employment, wealth and power. Several limitations appeared inevitable. Knowledge has to be restricted to formal scholastic education; wealth to private means (assets); and power to the ability of the individual to assert himself in the face of organisations. The material income from paid employment is the primary or grossincome. The immaterial income consists of characteristics of work such as the quality of the work, its conditions and its circumstances. These elements are not only desirable in themselves but also as a means to procure other good things. Although this is a sufficient motive for the study of their distribution, its importance extends even further.

The distribution of knowledge, income, wealth and power determine the structure of society. The position of individuals in the different distributions determines their position in relation to each other, their social rank or status. When speaking of social inequality it is not so much the unequal distribution of knowledge, income, wealth and power which is meant, as the different positions people occupy in the social order or rank. This leads to a social distance between people in different positions. The result of the classification of people on the basis of their positions in various distributions we call social stratification. The distribution of elements that are considered important personal attributes contributes to the social stratification. Which attributes are found to be of importance and the weight accorded to each of them depends on the system of values of a society. In the present system of values the elements of knowledge, material and immaterial income, wealth and power play a central role.

The distributions of the relevant attributes are interdependent. The closer the relation, the more salient the definition of status and the more difficult it is to bridge the social distance between people. Such a tight social stratification restricts contacts between different strata. The stratification contains its own justification and changes in relative positions are not generally accepted as legitimate. A social stratification not only contains its own justification but also its own negation. As long as the values underlying the stratification are not in dispute, the stratification has an integrating influence on society and continuity is promoted. Nevertheless, tensions are inherent in the stratifications. Inequality implies restrictions on behaviour which may be, oppressive, especially for those who are less fortunate from the distribution point of view. Finally the stratification may be condemned as unjust.

It is the opinion of the Council that tensions round the social stratification have increased during the last fifteen years. Forces that contribute to these tensions have not yet become extinct and new developments may further increase the strain. Therefore the Council thinks it important not only to gain insight into the distribution of the elements mentioned but also into the resulting social stratification.

In view of the foregoing the problem of this study can be summarized in the following questions. What degree of inequality exists in the distribution of knowledge, material and immaterial income from paid employment, wealth and power? How close is the connection between these distributions? Do causal relationships exist and of what kind are they? What is the actual and potential role of government policy in the distribution processes?

Inequality is defined subjectively and objectively. The term subjective inequality refers to the degree to which an individual perceives a distribution as unequal. Thus subjective inequality points out the existence of inequality.

Sometimes the government can find a legitimation for policy in subjective inequality. Hence there is both an indicative and a legitimating function.

The word objective inequality refers to the judgment which results from checking a distribution against one or more clearly defined criteria. The criteria chosen should link up with subjective inequality but this is not always possible. In spite of this, the description of objective inequality must be understood as an effort to make subjective inequality visible. The indicative and legitimating function of subjective inequality for government policy is 'hardened' in the objective inequality. The relativity is enhanced by being placed in the light of objective inequality.

There is a considerable gap between posing questions and answering them. An additional reason for this study was the impression that a scientific base for an integrated distribution policy was lacking. This supposition soon appeared to be justified.

Only fragmentary data were available, often outdated and difficult to compare. Besides, it appeared to be an impossible task to map out the whole field of social forces influencing the processes of distribution. Finally, it was not possible to indicate the limits of the possibilities of controlling these processes.

Nevertheless, an image has been formed of the processes of distribution and their relationship to each other. It is a hypothetical picture at high level of abstraction. Conclusions and recommendations drawn from this picture are mainly concerned with further scientific research and experiments. The gaps in the available knowledge and the far reaching consequences of (potential) government policy make the Council adopt a reserved attitude towards concrete policy recommendations, although a few suggestions concerning the division of attention of authorities over the relevant elements may be understood in that way.

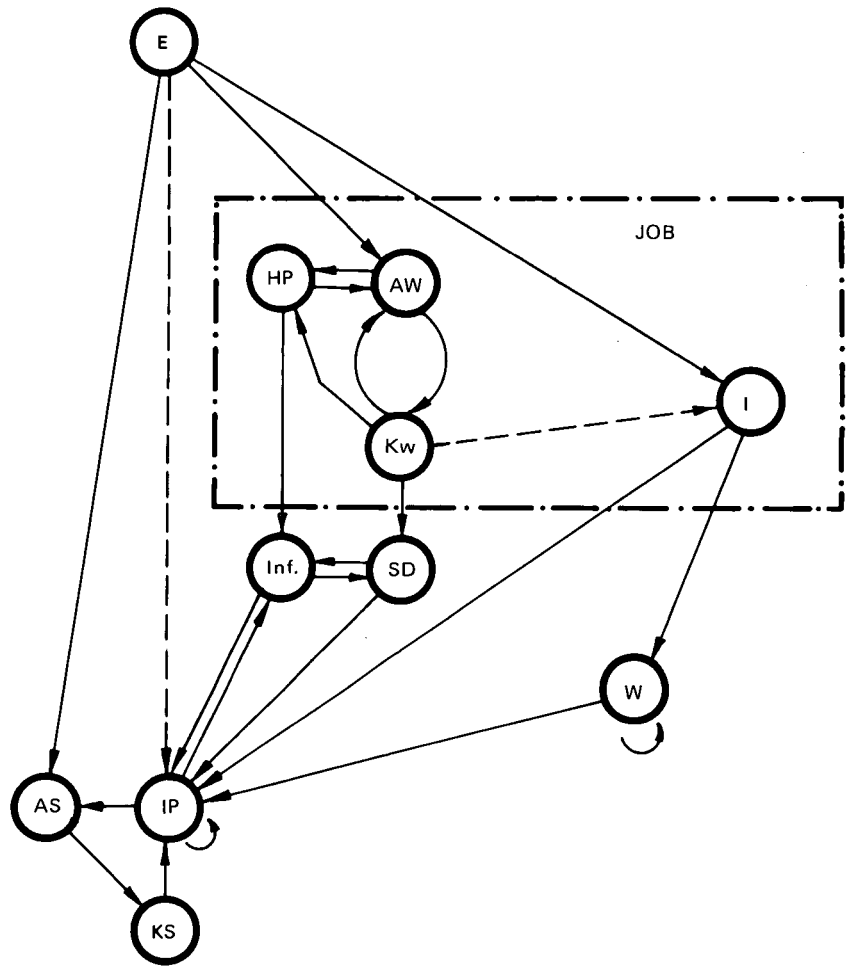
The distribution of knowledge will certainly not be less unequal than the distribution of formal education received in youth. The distribution of education reflects a substantial inequality according to the social milieu and this has not changed greatly during the last 30 years. The level of education determines to an important degree the income level as well as the existence of intrinsically satisfying attributes of work and of onerous working circumstances. The need for further schooling, however, is neither very great nor very urgent. As far as it occurs it is mainly prompted by occupational activities.

The distribution of the characteristics of paid employment is experienced as very unequal, for example, than the income distribution. Possibilities for change are deemed smaller than they actually are. The importance accorded to the quality of work increases, but the problems people experience are not yet adequately formulated by groups and organisations.

The differences in income from paid employment are considered too big. There is a general feeling that education, age and such like should count less in the assessment of job incomes and that effort, inconveniences and so on should count more. But asked to classify jobs according to the incomes they should yield people return to a traditional ranking. The decrease of inequality in incomes which has taken place in the last 30 years has left the incomes from paid employment almost untouched.

As regards the distribution of wealth the distribution of private means has been considered. In doing so the distribution of wealth can be adequately approximated, on the basis of the definition of private means, which is used in the statistics, though these only cover private means above a certain amount. So the distribution of private means is nevertheless only considered in part. There is no recent information as to how the inequality of wealth is experienced. The real inequality, as far as it can be determined on the basis of the available figures, has hardly changed during the last thirty years.

Power conceived in the narrow way as defined above is distributed very unequally. The most powerless people are not even interested in efforts to increase their ability to assert themselves in dealing with authorities and organisations. They only appreciate help that relieves them of taking initiatives. Against this background it is understandable that recent developments in participation and legal protection have caused a shift in the power distribution but no substantial lessening of power inequality.



- E = Education
- AW = Attributes of work  
the extent to which the job makes demands on the capacity to choose  
between alternative modes of action, as well as the freedom offered to do so
- HP = Hierarchical power
- Kw = Knowledge procured from experience in the job
- I = Income from work
- W = Wealth
- Inf. = The ability to procure and digest specific information
- SD = Self-direction, an attitude varying from a disposition to conform to  
externally imposed rules to a disposition to follow internal standards of  
behaviour
- IP = Individual power, the ability to assert oneself in the face of organisations
- AS = Attributes of a situation qualify the extent to which a social situation  
demands the capacity of choosing between alternative modes of action
- KS = Knowledge based on experience in social situations

The job plays a central part in the distribution processes with regard to knowledge, material and immaterial income from work, wealth and power in their correlations. Causal relations operating through the job always carry more weight than relations effected outside the job.

Therefore in the description of the total causal coherence priority is given to consideration of the job. In the diagram on page 6 circles represent the elements (education etc.), arrows the causal relations. The diagram is not a model that can be quantified. The dotted lines indicate a relationship that is only effectuated after passing a certain threshold value of the independent variable.

Education (E) occupies an important place in the model because it strongly determines the quality of work (AW) and the level in the hierarchy (HP) at which one enters the labour process. In addition the starting income (I) is dependent on education.

Three roads lead from E to I, one direct and two indirect; one by the reciprocal interaction AW-Kw (knowledge procured from experience in the job, the 'experienced spiral') and another by the 'career spiral' AW-Kw-HP. The line Kw-I has been dotted to indicate that this relation only arises when Kw reaches a threshold-value.

The sort of job (AW) in which one finds oneself on entering the labour process is almost entirely dependent on the level of education.

Not only the starting function, but also the functions one can finally reach with a certain level of education have been fixed in many branches of trade and industry.

The work organisation has a pyramidal power structure. In principle all power is concentrated at the top. On lower levels power is obtained by delegation from the top. This makes it possible to split up work in such a manner that functions higher up in the organization have a high quality and functions low down a low quality and possibly many inconveniences.

Moreover, differences in power enable the powerful to pass on disagreeable aspects to lower levels and thus to enlarge the differences more than is reasonable on the grounds of educational criteria.

The more the job situation makes demands on thinking, weighing up and choosing, the more it represents a learning situation. This non-scholastic learning does not raise the level of abstraction at which one has learned to think at school, but is connected with operationalising the categories in which scholastic knowledge was expressed.

Two circuits are connected with learning by experience. One leads to craftsmanship or advanced specialisation, the other leads to higher levels in the organisation (HP), where the job again provides new opportunities for learning by experience, etc. The last circuit implies leadership and is more highly appreciated in terms of money than good craftsmanship.

From jobs that give little or no opportunity for learning by experience one cannot enter the career spiral. The power and contacts inherent in a high position in the work organisation give entrance to diverse canals of information (Inf.). The information can be useful both inside as well as outside the labour process.

The starting income is coupled to the level of education, since education is considered to be indicative of the capacities required in the job. This has been formalised in different ways. Moreover, income regulation is carried through into later phases of the career by the construction of scales of payment. Scales can be applied to express the relevance of experience in incomes. The greater range in the higher salary scales is connected with the fact that learning by experience is considered more important in higher

functions. Thus the formation of income is almost entirely withdrawn from market influences.

Only in a small number of top functions is the income wholly determined by the market.

Competition is competition for functions with a fixed income. In this situation it is extremely difficult to break through the income ceiling determined by the educational requirements. Competition is now also very limited between persons with an equal level of education but with different vocational training.

Specialisation and differentiation of levels in the educational system have given education an extremely important function in recruitment, selection and allocation for the labour market. By choosing a certain type of vocational education and a certain specialisation one became to an increasing extent predestined for a certain type of starting job. In this way the labour market has been narrowed into component markets which can be overseen more easily.

The establishment of an internal labour market within big enterprises is a logical sequel to this development. The importance of learning by experience, the difficulty of judging the ability of outsiders, the money spent by enterprises on training activities, and on the other hand the need for security of employment, the unwillingness of employees to move and the complicated structure of the labour market are contributing factors. In the recruitment function of the educational system for the labour market an effective feed back mechanism is lacking. This is even impossible in principle due to the autonomy of the educational system, the ideology of equal chances and the free choice of study and vocation.

A favorably characterised job is often coupled with a high income, an unfavorably characterised one with a low income. There is, however, no causal relation between attributes of work and income (except in a few functions high up in the work organisation).

The relationship is determined by the education factor. Its cause is the firm institutionalisation of power relationship in the work organisation and the institutionalisation of education as a criterion for allocation as well as remuneration.

Among the relationship effected partly outside the job there are two relations between education (E) and individual power, conceived as the ability to assert oneself in the face of organisations. There is a direct connection and an indirect one, with quality of work (AW), learning by experience at work (Kw) and self-direction (SD) as intervening variables.

This indirect road contributes the most to individual power, if indeed the job offers possibilities for learning. The direct connection has been drawn in the form of a dotted line to indicate that it only comes about at a certain threshold value of E.

Then there is the circuit IP-Inf.-SD-IP.

The contribution to this circle from E by AW and Kw is much more important than by E-IP.

The initial education lays the foundation for further learning by means of schools or experience, but it does not sufficiently develop the capacity to assert oneself in the face of organisational power (IP). Only at the highest levels of education does the ability for intellectual abstraction appear to be so highly developed, that in new situations one independently learns 'by doing'.

Of paramount importance for individual power is the learning situation offered by daily work. Education determines the position in the work organisation and thereby the opportunity to enlarge one's knowledge on the

basis of experience. The scope for learning decreases strongly lower down in the work organisation. Indeed, not only is the work situation there lacking as a learning situation, but it breeds an attitude of conformity and acquiescence which even inhibits learning.

This too determines the ability to procure and digest information (Inf.) Independence will express itself, first and foremost, in an active search for information.

There is yet another relation between education and individual power which is brought about by learning by experience in social situations outside work. This relation too is less powerful than that through employment. Learning by experience can take place most intensively and continuously in the job. It is unlikely that sporadic learning situations (political participation, contact with authorities) will ever have an effect even faintly approaching that of the work situation. There are also relationships between income from work, wealth (private means) (W) and individual power (IP).

The relationship between the income level and (the possibility of) the formation of wealth is obvious. There is, however, still more to the relation than appears at first sight. There is also a relation between the level of expected income and the possibilities for the formation of wealth. It is worth noting this because the age-income-profile of higher educational levels, i.e. higher income levels, is much more pronounced and thus the possibilities for the formation of wealth are cumulative as time goes on.

House ownership is the most striking example. Here everything is cumulative. A high income whilst one is still young offers its recipient: the high income itself, a favorable income profile and an early start to the formation of wealth.

As to the influence of wealth on income, there is no problem in the fact that he who saves reaps fruits, whether the saving be compulsory or voluntary. Part of social security can be interpreted in this way, since the manner in which saving is brought about is not perceived as a matter of significance. Thus the influence of wealth upon income is not found to be problematic. Problems come to the fore when inherited wealth or profits from capital are taken into consideration. The inheritance of wealth has lost much of its significance because the formation of wealth has been depersonalised to a great extent. The inequality of starting positions of persons of the same generation which nevertheless derives from inherited wealth does not seem to be experienced as problematic or unjust by large groups.

The size and particularly the distribution of profits from capital are also relevant. Although part of these are without doubt spent on consumer goods, profits from capital are not considered as income and therefore not taxed. Thus profits from capital add a dimension to the influence of income on the formation of wealth and to the unequal distribution of wealth and income from wealth. Compared to this the influence of wealth on income is only of minor importance.

Income and wealth contribute to individual power. They certainly make it easier to get help in the way of documentation, lawyers, tax consultants and such professional services. But one should not overestimate the influence. There are increasing possibilities of getting information and help free of charge or at cost price.

To sum up, many relationships exist between education (E) and individual power (IP). Contrary to the stereotyped opinion the contribution of income (I) to power is limited. It appears from the scheme on page 6 that this impression could arise, because a high income and substantial individual power are both connected with a high job function, but the direct relationship between income and individual power is of lesser weight. The



slight importance of the direct relation between education and individual power implies that a heightening of the average level of education will be of little consequence for the relation E-AS-KS-IP does not outweigh the relation E-AW-Kw-IP. The redistribution of IP would be served best by a more equal distribution of the relevant work attributes, whereby many more work situations would also become learning situations. The relations within the job are only influenced from outside by education.

There is a high degree of causal relationship between the elements, so that we may speak of a consolidated stratification. Moreover, this relationship is solidly anchored in organisational structures, norms and regulations, in other words, it is strongly institutionalised.

Persons who are not economically active do indeed get their income from other sources, but they can be seriously hampered in the development and maintenance of individual power (unemployed youth, women, the handicapped, the elderly), which does not then receive any impulses from the pursuit of an occupation. (This is a different matter than the alienating effect of unemployment.)

The model is valid under the conditions of the last 30 years. The most important of these are economic growth and employment. Economic growth made it possible for the whole population to share in the increasing prosperity, so that differences were emphasized less.

The fact that there were few employment problems, or at least not very noticeable ones, meant that the significance of work as a structure forming element in society remained unquestioned. Unemployment was for the greatest part hidden by social security provisions such as the Disablement Insurance Act and by the fact that there were not many inadequate opportunity groups on the labour market (women). Although manifest unemployment has increased, this situation has not yet essentially changed.

If structural unemployment of considerable dimensions lies ahead of us, this can have far reaching consequences for the model presented.

A strong, firmly institutionalised relationship exists between the different distributions. The resultant, the social stratification, shows small, but pronounced status differences, with successive strata referring to one other. The present social stratification arose with the development of the present production system. Together with the expansion of this system a cultural unity came into being, in which equality is stressed more than inequality; this brings about weakening of the legitimacy of the existing social stratification.

The tension evoked does not lead to a substantial change in the social stratification, since it is marked by great rigidity. It has become clear from the above that the level reached in the initial phase of education determines to a great extent the position in the social stratification. It is therefore remarkable there is so little movement in the participation of the different social milieus in the initial phase of education. The same applies to the relatively sparse use that is made of schooling facilities after the phase of initial education. In spite of the key position occupied by education, up to now educational participation has not contributed to a break through in the social stratification.

In the foregoing the job figured as the focus of the various distribution processes.

Yet for the majority of workers the job offers no possibilities of changing the position that has once been acquired in the stratification. The jobs that do offer these opportunities are to be found in the higher strata.

Therefore the job is of no actual importance for breaking through the stratification.

The distribution of power conceived as the ability to assert oneself in the face of organizations, is very unequal.

It is closely connected with the educational level, which is again related to the learning scope of the work situation. In view of this it is very improbable that a break through in the existing social stratification will find a starting point in the power distribution.

From the relationships between the various elements and their distributions it becomes clear that the distributions of income from work and wealth are also marked by rigidity. Neither will these distribution processes readily prompt a break through in the social stratification.

The rigidity in the distribution of all the different elements and of their relationship is great. It is noticeable that developments that might have detracted from the cohesion, did not in fact have that effect. If in this context we may use the word market, then it is clear that so-called market conforming tendencies are scarcely able to enforce themselves. The distribution processes are strongly institutionalised and changes have to be enacted within an institutional framework or at least find support there. In the past changes of this kind have regularly been brought about in such a way. The government has turned increasingly to a redistribution of available means prompted by the gap between a not seriously disputed equality of needs and the great inequality of means.

Nevertheless the conception of the welfare state has come up for discussion. Doubt has been thrown on its materialistic orientation and the question has been put also as to whether certain human values are not more harmed than promoted. More attention has been called for the environment and for utilisation of space. Some think that economic expansion should be deliberately halted in order to keep our society 'liveable'. This implies a greater accent on the future of society and a shifting of emphasis in the balance between present prosperity and the satisfaction of needs in the future. For the collective sector this would mean giving greater weight to public goods (environmental health, land utilisation).

More especially when the economy is stagnant, but also in the case of limited growth, calls on collective means for the fulfilment of individual needs will be more and more restricted.

The tension round the social stratification and the response from the government have up till now been concentrated mainly on income. In the model described income is a consequence, not a cause. It is thus quite conceivable that starting points for a solution are contained in the relationships of the model.

The observations made on subjective inequality do not at first sight correspond with the increasing tension round the social stratification:

- The manifest need for further training after the initial phase of education is not very great and where present, not very urgent;
- The distribution of intrinsically satisfying attributes of work is considered more unequal than the income distribution. Though the former is deemed important, this distribution receives little attention;
- Judgement of objective criteria for a distribution of incomes deviates remarkably from judgement on the basis of more subjective factors and values;
- There is a category of people who are not interested in enhancing their capacity to assert themselves in the face of organizations.

With the present state of knowledge it is impossible to interpret these phenomena without ambiguity. Two facts seem, however, to call for

mention as explanation on the basis of the relations described. For many people, work does not provide a learning situation. Naturally this also applies to those who have no job. Since the opportunities for learning in social situations other than the work situation are usually of short duration, only the learning situation at work provides the stimulus for the acquisition of knowledge, coupled with learning by experience. The absence of a learning situation at work not only influences the work performance but also influences behaviour in other social situations. Thus the need for expanding one's knowledge and for learning by experience is lacking where there is no lasting learning situation.

The intellectual, cognitive orientation of our society lies deeply anchored in people's minds. The hierarchical system of the work organization where 'superiors' are considered more capable than 'inferiors' results in the distribution of work attributes connected with capability being left out of discussion. As a derivative of this state of affairs the distribution of other work attributes are not commented upon either, because it is not possible to draw a sharp line of demarcation between the two sorts of attributes.

Moreover, the deeply anchored cognitive orientation makes for the dominance of 'knowledge' in the judgement of income differences. This orientation plays a central role in the current system of values.

Changes in the system of values are not anticipated here. Thus the orientation described also forms the basis for the examination of government policy.

Inequality as experienced by the individual has an indicative and legitimating function for government policy. But the government also has its own responsibility in the choice and design of a future society. Therefore ideas and intentions concerning the distribution processes recently expressed in government memoranda and bills are broadly checked against the model described.

Although the insight obtained will only give a rough picture, the Council thinks it valuable for a discussion of social inequality and for increasing the effectivity of government policy.

The ideas of policy makers about the various distributions in part correspond with what is experienced by individuals. The attunement is greatest with regard to income distribution. Policy makers seem to give greater weight to lessening educational inequality than that accorded by individuals. The difference may be partly due to the fact that social sciences fail to trace existing needs. On the other hand policy makers have insufficiently detailed ideas on the distribution of work attributes compared to the inequality experienced by the individual. A drastically inadequate set of instruments for the realisation of a redistribution will in all probability have something to do with this. The same applies to the distribution of individual power. As to the distribution of wealth, it is noticeable that this is a blind spot with the policy makers as well as with individuals.

As far as the result of carrying out the current intentions of policy makers is concerned, the conclusion is nearly always that there will be some reduction in the existing inequality. This may take the form of an improvement in weak positions in a distribution (education) or of a smaller gap between the extremities of the scale and between the various intermediate positions (income); or the result may be so slight that there is no clear tendency evident (work attributes, power) or the same conclusion can be drawn because of lack of clarity in the effect (wealth).

In none of the cases is there reason to conclude that there is increased mobility, which would make the rigidity of the stratification less felt. Neither will there be a breakthrough the high degree of correlation between the

different distributions. The result of present ideas and objectives on distribution and distribution policy will consequently imply a diminuation of the social gap between people, but the actual ranking order will be preserved. It will be strengthened rather than broken down, due to the necessary expansion of the institutional structure.

On the grounds of these conclusions the Council has investigated how a break through of the social stratification can be achieved, if need is felt for this. The basic principle for this analysis is the fundamental equality of all people as formulated in the Interim Memorandum on Incomes Policy. Given the correlations described above such a policy must give priority to a redistribution of work attributes. This cannot be done without reorganising work as otherwise the possibilities are rather limited. It is precisely in the reorganisation of work that there are more possibilities than is usually believed.

For a further analysis and development of organisational structure the distinction between 'organic structure' and 'personnel structure' is essential. 'Organic structure' refers to the grouping of functions in the production process into bodies and joining them into larger units. The 'personnel structure' is the staffing of functions in these bodies. It is a question here of the structure of command, of who has what authority, of who fills which function.

Research will have to show to what extent certain 'organic structures' can be combined with certain 'personnel structures' and which combinations give better results. Nowadays a learning situation is lacking in many jobs. A redistribution of work attributes can change this. In the opinion of the Council optimal conditions for an adequate learning situation in the job are most closely approximated in the creation of recurrent education.

Recurrent education is considered here as a valid alternative to the traditional conception of education, sometimes indicated by the term 'youth education'. It is a wholly different system and tries to break through the fixed sequence of education – work – leisure – retirement.

In general the principal motives for recurrent education are dissatisfaction with the results of the existing system and lack of confidence that it will be able to fulfil its tasks satisfactorily in the future. As opposed to this, recurrent education claims to promote intra-occupational as well as inter-occupational mobility, a flexible relationship between school and labour market and an integration of scholastic learning and learning by experience.

In one important respect the traditional and alternative conception of education resemble each other. Both have an initial educational phase with basic teaching. This schooling is obligatory and the end of this period marks the upper limit of compulsory education; it gives the minimum preparation for life in society.

At the moment at which the young people have finished compulsory education, they all receive an 'educational capital' or 'right to learn', that they can draw upon when they want to. In principle this may be done immediately after the initial phase of education, but it is conceivable that a compulsory period is inserted for gaining social experience. It is actually logical that basic schooling should be followed by a period of learning by experience at work. An essential element in conception of recurrent education is that in addition to the line that runs from school to work there is a regular feed back from social situations to school. The importance of learning by experience is accentuated by a compulsory withdrawal from the

educational system after completion of the initial phase. There is one possible danger that should be avoided, namely the specific use of the initial phase for general education, while the recurrent phase would be reserved mainly for vocational training. Such stereotyping would surely mean an impoverishment of education.

Of course the chance of successfully realising the objective of recurrent education will be very small if the organisation of work is not such that the job stimulates the desire to learn.

The introduction of recurrent education will have far reaching consequences for remuneration systems and career lines. In particular there will be a change in the relative importance of education and experience as criteria for remuneration. The school and the labour market will fit in better with each other than they do now. The educational system will also be better able to contribute to people's social competence.

Summarizing it can be stated that in this way the distribution of starting positions on entering the labour market becomes very equal. Later a differentiation will take place, but it is not entirely clear how this will occur since the relative importance of education and experience has not been determined. In any case the degree of correlation between the various distributions will decrease and mobility will increase. The central significance of paid employment for social stratification gives rise to a question which up till now has been passed over.

Will there be enough jobs in the long term? This question is not answered here. The Council has expressed its expectations in the report 'Maken wij er werk van?', a study concerning the working and the non-working parts of the population.

This study shows that the Council believes that everything should be done to provide everyone who can work with a suitable job. It is, however, conceivable that such a policy will not be completely successful.

Not to have a job means to lack a social role, which is of the foremost importance for the feeling of being recognized and accepted among fellow human beings. If society does not succeed in creating roles that are equivalent to the employment role, the social consequences of the ensuing inequality cannot be estimated.

Such roles cannot be made by government policy. They develop in a long-winded process of change in values, behaviour and mentality. Policy, however, can contribute to this process, even without calling for irreversible developments.

This latter condition is necessary as long as it is not clear in what direction society and especially employment is developing. As regards these roles two matters are at stake:

- Pursuits offering scope for learning;
- The significance attached to these activities by society, which is reflected in the status of the people pursuing them.

Only the first matter is suitable for influence by policy. The authorities can lend a hand by providing opportunities for activities with the possibility of learning, which do not have vocational characteristics.

The foregoing conclusions which are supported by the model described above, can be a guide line for long term policy concerning social stratification, which fits in with existing tendencies in society and with government policy. The model designed has repeatedly been called hypothetical. This does not mean that empirical support is wholly lacking, but that the various relations have been put forward with more conviction than strictly speaking is justified by the extent of their scientific testing. For the Council this is no reason to propose their being completely checked. On the contrary the Council

considers that research should be put in hand selectively and deliberately. It must be clear what role the results can play in the phases of preparing for, deciding on and implementing policy. Research must be designed accordingly. This conviction has served the Council as a guide in making recommendations for policy and research.

The Council considers that on the grounds of the existing situation and the developments to be expected a policy aimed at redistribution of attributes of work is required.

The Council thinks such a policy necessary irrespective of the problematical character of tensions round the social stratification.

Similarly the Council considers that on the grounds of present and expected problems in the existing educational system, the introduction of a system of recurrent education may be advocated.

A policy aimed at the establishment of recurrent education can be a strong support for a policy aimed at the redistribution of work attributes. In the opinion of the Council this combination forms the nucleus of a policy directed to achieving alterations in the social stratification.

Investigation of the extent to which the social stratification is experienced as problematical can have a function in forming the political will. But the investigation is complicated and the significance of the results is uncertain. A number of pilot studies are therefore recommended.

The distribution of individual power is accompanied by a set of relations which have been scientifically verified to different degrees. Their significance for policy making, especially for educational policy, also differs substantially. Power is an extremely unruly object for research, but recent developments in legal protection and possibilities of participation (co-determination) may help to trace bottlenecks.

The implementation of the existing policy intentions concerning income distribution fits into the framework of a stratification policy as described above. Nevertheless there are some problems to be solved concerning the relationship between objective variables such as education, age and so on and subjective factors in their significance for incomes and the way in which differences in income are experienced. Another problem is the importance of work experience in the evolution of the income during the career. Research is recommended.

A policy for stratification must be found wanting if unemployment were to become a lasting phenomenon of considerable size. From this point of view too the Council wishes to stress the urgency of a broad and intensive approach to the problems of employment. Nevertheless the Council considers it recommendable to anticipate a possible large and enduring degree of unemployment by studying possibilities for alternative activities that are in some aspects equivalent to paid employment.