

VISION  
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If humanity does not take steps over its destiny, it will go the way of the dinosaur, says Club of Rome president Aurelio Peccei.

## TEN YEARS RESPITE

**Vision:** The Club of Rome recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. Are its members satisfied with the work it has done?

**Aurelio Peccei:** Actually, we tried not to *celebrate* our tenth anniversary, but to take stock of the general situation in the world in the last 10 years and to imagine what will happen from now on.

Since the date when the Club was formed, in April 1968, the situation

has deteriorated on all fronts. There have of course been techno-scientific improvements, but they have been unsystematic, uncoordinated, and many of them have originated other problems of a political and social nature. So altogether today man is more confused, more worried and less secure than 10 years ago.

But there is something new: the greater awareness of ordinary people around the world of the gravity of the situation.

**Vision:** Don't you think that your rather sophisticated reports could confuse ordinary people even more?

**Peccei:** Of course our reports are pitched to interest people who have a certain cultural preparation. These people must function as a transmission pulley to other people, so that vaster masses will be exposed to our ideas. In many parts of the world even ordinary people now know that there are limits to growth; ►

that growth cannot be the same as in the past; that there is a quality of life which we are losing and must create anew. Also, many understand that the centre of decision cannot be any longer only in the nation, and that interdependence is a fact.

So we can say the message has probably trickled down, though not as much as we would want or as much as it should.

**Vision:** In this framework, do you think that the Club should go on with its work or resort to the "self-dissolution" which was considered from the beginning, if it failed to reach its goal?

**Peccei:** In a recent poll Club members—a 100 people of different cultures, backgrounds and convictions—concluded that the experiment had been worthwhile and should be continued. But only if the Club was actually able to interpret the new problems of the world and even if it involved redirecting its activities.

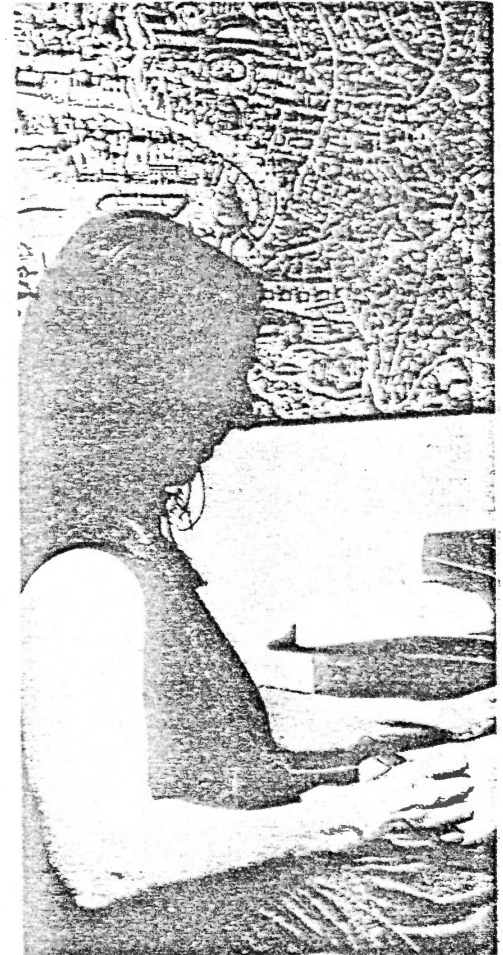
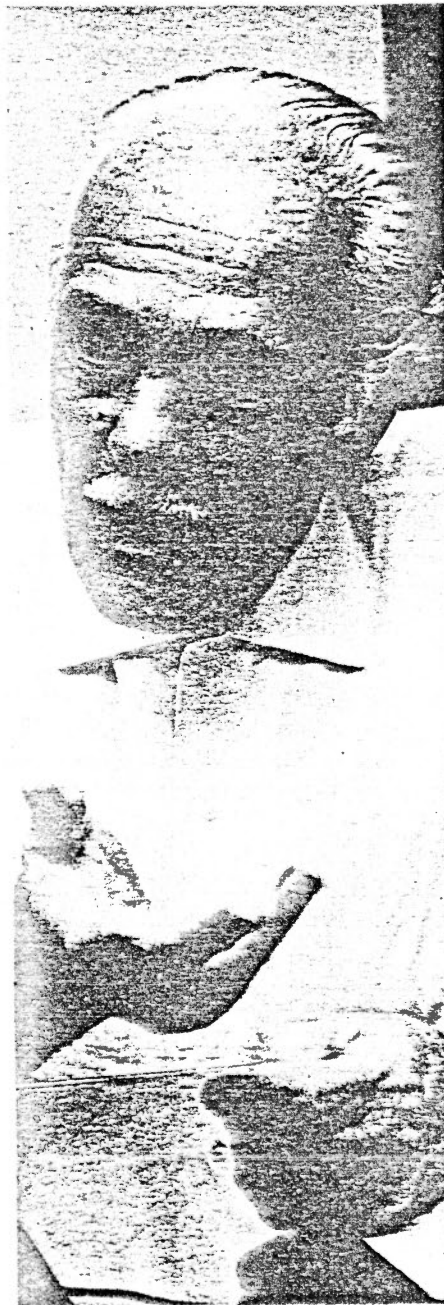
**Vision:** The Club's reports are always widely discussed. But didn't you expect governments to take more heed of them?

**Peccei:** I think we have nurtured a great evolution in governments and leaders: their understanding of international problems is more sophisticated than it used to be. But they have constraints in their own constitutions, in their own jurisdictions, in their own constituencies. They have to respond to national, sometimes short-term interests; but perhaps they understand that in the long run it would be better to respond to wider interests.

**Vision:** Industry as well has often been indifferent to your work.

**Peccei:** Certainly, but industry, the corporation, has limits and constraints too. The need for improvement has been much more in the minds of its leaders than in their acts. Private enterprise must make an effort to update itself.

Actually, one of the projects we want to initiate is on the future



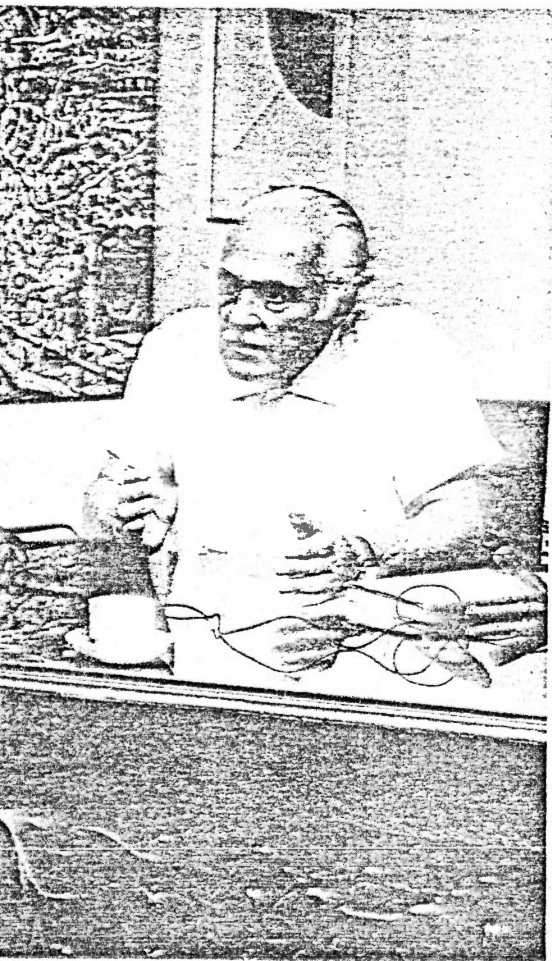
*The Club of Rome was born in 1968. Ten years later Aurelio Peccei (above with VISION's Lidia Gazzo) is convinced this experiment with an 'assembly of private citizens' has proved it was worth the effort put in.*

### Club of Rome projects

- 1972 The limits to growth
- 1974 Mankind at the turning point
- 1976 Reshaping the international order
- 1977 Beyond the age of waste
- 1977 Goals for mankind
- 1979 Learning

of private enterprise. Personally I believe private enterprise is indispensable for the well-being of mankind, but probably not within the framework, the statutes, the principles which exist today: it must adapt to this changed human society, its allegiance to the public good must be much stronger, and the defence of sectoral and group interests must be blended with a much greater understanding of society's goals.

**Vision:** Isn't it possible for the



Club to communicate more effectively with industry and governments?

**Peccei:** Remember that the Club of Rome is a group of people who, from the beginning, decided they could have only a catalytic power. To put it in grand terms, we could perhaps act as the conscience of mankind; more simply, we could be the reminders of neglected duties, the pointers to existing possibilities. But we should never act "instead of", or suggest actual policies for anybody, because the world is too diversified.

We cannot tell the steel industry, the motor car factories, the farmers in France and India what they should do.

Ours is really an educational effort.

We have never written specific recommendations, only general ones. Perhaps, though, if we can start this private enterprise project, we may suggest to private enter-

prise some new specific kinds of behaviour.

**Vision:** The Club is now working on its sixth project, about learning. Does this report include thoughts which could contribute to solving one of today's major problems, the problem of unemployment?

**Peccei:** I think that the concept behind the learning project is much wider than the requirements of one sector or the other: we must not only learn how to absorb the jobless but also to live in peace with nature and in harmony with others.

We are now witnessing a global crisis due to a "human gap", a cleavage between a runaway reality created by man and the cultural and behavioural evolution of man himself. If man does not want to disappear as a species it must develop—it is scientifically proved that only one part of the human brain is now in use—its latent potential.

**Vision:** What does this mean in concrete terms?

**Peccei:** The learning project tries precisely to propose ways and means whereby this dormant human capacity will be put into use.

**Vision:** For the first time Eastern European and Third World countries have been associated in a Club of Rome project.

**Peccei:** It is a three-legged effort, the main leg being the University of Bucharest in Rumania. The second is partly in Europe and partly in the United States, precisely in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the third in a developing country, Morocco.

But these three teams pool together resources from other countries in a wide area.

**Vision:** What about the financing for the project?

**Peccei:** The financing is also tripartite: by the University of Bucharest in Rumania, mostly by American foundations in the West, by European foundations and the Moroccan government.

**Vision:** What other projects will follow?

**Peccei:** We have two projects in the pipeline. One concerns capital requirement and capital formation in the world. By this we understand both the financial accumulation and natural resources which must be available, all the material means we need to do what we must do; develop alternative sources of energy, settle a couple of billion people more between now and the end of the century, increase productivity in agriculture, and so on.

**Vision:** And what is the second?

**Peccei:** It is about energy. It will be a sort of consolidation of all the other studies which have been undertaken so far. It will try to give a picture of the energy crisis which must be expected sometime around the 1980 s.

We must remember that most projections are predicted on the availability of oil, which in turn is based on the assumption that the largest supplier Saudi Arabia will not enter into any crisis. We have lived to see many crises, but we make this far-fetched, surprise-free assumption that Saudi Arabia will not experience one.

There should be a second look at the question of energy, and we hope to provide it, showing how essential it is to make a joint effort. This effort should come mainly from developed countries, but should include as many developing countries as possible, if we want to face the joint emergency which is bound to come about very shortly.

**Vision:** You sound very pessimistic about the future for the world.

**Peccei:** Yes we issued a warning 10 years ago, but looking back we feel it was so easy to do something then, and so difficult to do it today. But it is much more necessary. We think that mankind has perhaps only ten years or less to chose another course, different from the present one which is bound to end in disaster.

*Interview by Lidia Gazzo.*