

This was the second contribution to ISR on the subject by Dr Alexander King, a good friend from student days, and a Member of our Editorial Board. (The first was published in ISR Vol. 4, No. 1 page 54, 1979, the second in ISR 11/1 in March 1986). Dr Aurelio Peccei, an Italian industrialist, and Dr Alexander King, a British chemist and Science Administrator, met in 1967 and discussed the many difficulties facing today's world, later termed the *Problématique*. They decided to invite 20 senior European personalities from different professions to consider these problems in greater detail. Their first meeting took place in Rome in April 1968, hence the name 'The Club of Rome'.

In fact King, later the President of the Club of Rome, had in mind to follow the example of the 'Lunar Society' of Birmingham at the end of the 18th century. There, on Moon-lit nights, (to return home safely) eminent scientists and industrialists talked about their problems, and their conclusions first triggered the beginnings of, and later catalysed, the Industrial Revolution.

The strength—and weakness—of both was the absence of any formal organisation, of any structure and their independence of any financial constitution. Like an American think-tank, the aim of the Club of Rome was to influence policy through the creation of a better understanding of the complex tangle of contemporary global problems. Their conclusions were to be communicated to Heads of State and to the public, to lead to a better world.

Membership of the Club of Rome is international and consists of eminent private citizens, acting together as catalysts, desiring no political power, nor inventing any new ideology. These aims were excellent and met with widespread approval. After an invitation I joined the London Branch of the Club of Rome at the Athenaeum Club and often participated in their interdisciplinary discussions. However, as no opportunity offered itself of communicating with decision-makers, I decided that simply talking about the *problématique* was sterile, and I resigned. I was sad, as King's basic concept for the Club of Rome was "the cultivation of interdisciplinary approaches", the same policy as of ISR. King had come to the same conclusion as I, namely that today's problems were too complex to be solved in isolation by politicians, by economists, engineers or scientists.

The greatest success of the Club of Rome was the publication in paper-back in 1972 of its report *Limits to Growth* prepared at MIT by a team of young scientists under the guidance of Professor Dennis L. Meadows. More than 5 million copies in 30 languages were sold. It was a controversial book and widely attacked by conservative economists. However, it achieved its aim, informing experts and the general public about the limits of resources that exist on our planet.