

The Future of Work (Part 2)
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Economists and sociologists worry about the future of work. Robotics are replacing many human workers, endangering jobs in the future for people who had formerly enjoyed middle class status.

Toll takers on the San Francisco bridges are gone, replaced by cameras and iPads. Less visible were the changes in manufacturing (humans no longer needed for assembly lines) and mining. Despite former President Trump's lie that he would revive dirty energy industries, most were already closing down, and those remaining had their work force reduced because of the new automations.

In supermarkets, some have one checkout station that is self-serve, which threatens the good union jobs held currently by checkers.

Self-driving cars, busses, and trucks, all with an obvious future, eliminate even more jobs: drivers.

Even some surgeons are finding that robots can do certain surgeries better than the surgeons themselves, with at least help for more delicate operations.

So what happens to work? If people have no income, how do they live in a society? Will artificial intelligence replace us all? This is a real question, and although we will not see this dire picture in the immediate future, we will see something like this not too far off.

Blue Collar Work.

Of most concern today is the work future of lesser educated blue collar workers, mostly young and able bodied. Fortunately, we are in desperate need of rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure: roads, bridges, buildings, and desperately needed housing. While some artificial intelligence will be of use (such as factory made houses), human labor is still needed for some time to come. The Green Revolution also promises a whole range of new jobs, from labor to professional.

Robotics Maintenance

Robotics themselves need technicians who can repair and maintain such equipment, and can instruct users (such as surgeons) in their utility. These are new jobs. We can recall the enormous change in jobs when horsepower was replaced by the automobile. A whole range of jobs became obsolete, but were quickly replaced by those who adopted the new technologies. We will find the same thing happening today.

Senior Care

With most countries facing ageing populations, there is a need for human care. The Japanese tried robots, but they really cannot replace human kindness. What are today low-paid immigrant labor jobs will become jobs for those with training and the salaries to warrant it.

Nursing has already enjoyed such an elevation in status, with appropriate money for the work. There will be increasing need for nurses, Nurse practitioners, nursing specialists (surgery), and emerging local health services for rural people who have been underserved.

Education

The model for excellent teachers for our young can be seen in Finland, where teachers are well trained, competitive, and paid good wages. The results are obvious. Your education system is as good as you are willing to invest in it.

Changes face universities as well. Many mediocre professors will be replaced by super-teachers who can reach thousands of students electronically.

Work Weeks

Human labor has changed from around the clock in antiquity to the six-day 48-hour week, then to the universal 40-hour week. Now some companies are experimenting with a 32-hour week, and early reports are finding that productivity has not changed. Apparently the same work can be done in less time, providing more leisure time to workers and their families.

With shorter work weeks and more time for leisure, a number of new jobs will emerge for those catering to the demand for entertainment, sports, hobbies, and travel.

More Visionary Solutions

In various small towns, governments are experimenting with paying all residents a living wage with no work required. Sociologists chart what people do with an unearned income. Will they decline into drunkenness and idleness?

To everyone's surprise, this has not happened. When even poor people have a stipend, they spend it on things that improve the health and happiness of the family. We already know that with earlier retirement already common, people find useful things to do with their time. Retired communities engage in lifelong learning, hobbies, social services, and contributions to political life. Could this be our future?

683 words.

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