

The Impact of Automation on Work



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Golden Age of Gaia

Vancouver: Golden Age of Gaia, 2023

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Introduction (1998)



In 1990 I was driving through what had once been small towns on Canada's west coast, when I suddenly became aware of something radically different.

In Parksville on Vancouver Island, where we were motoring, all the familiar Mom-and-Pop restaurants and grocery stores were now gone, replaced by the same franchise outlets that I was used to in the big city.

The recognition came as an epiphany. I asked myself what had happened to alter the business landscape so much. The inquiry led to eight years of studying the impact of automation which, by 1990, was well underway.

I became alarmed at what that impact on the work world seemed to be. But, though a few authors were writing on it and though I contacted labour leaders, government leaders, and anyone else of influence, no one seemed willing to listen. My own personal belief was that everyone was in love with the computer at that particular time and no one wanted to hear bad news about it.

That one cognition, that one perceptual take or snapshot that seeing the familiar rendered so unfamiliar set off in me, caused me to study for years after.

A recognition of homogenous, national-chain franchises maxed out with computerization, drawing on low-paid, dead-ended employees, usually young, old,

or immigrant, gave me a gestalt of what was happening to my world-neighborhood. Looking into all facets of the situation I began to read about the technological revolution and the many reasons for applying automation to work.

Somehow the first awakening, which simply had me look and see, was leading to a more general awakening. I felt awake when I saw that automation was a process that we set in motion which had the potential to turn on us and destroy our well-being piece by piece and step by step.

When I presented my conclusions to friends, reporters, business leaders, union leaders, and others, no one recognized what I was saying or saw a threat when they understood.

Or else the subject had been talked about too often and wasn't new any longer. For whatever reason, no one in 1990-91 seemed moved to act on their knowledge. Zuboff was aware of it. Edgar Schein at MIT knew about and agreed with my conclusions. The most bizarre exchange was with a labor economist employed by the Canadian government who said in a phone call, "Oh yes, we know all about it. Yes, I agree with what you're saying. And I'm not allowed to talk about it."

It was not useful to talk about what was wrong with automation in 1991. I remember once feeling so driven that I stood up on a park bench on English Bay in Vancouver and began to ask people what they thought about the situation. I couldn't believe how energized I felt by speaking out and listening to others on the subject. But these were token gestures.

I remember once visiting a pulp-and-paper engineering firm halfway through the Nineties, a firm that I had once worked for as a corporate communications officer. I found them reduced to doing only modifications rather than entire mills, because the machine manufacturers could now do the additional computerized design without the help of high-paid consultants. The firm was left with no work, made obsolete by the computer.

And so it went, industry by industry, career by career.

Much later, around 2002, when I offered my collection of primary materials on automation to any archive or library that would take it, as representative documents collected at a key time in the history of the automation of industry, again no one showed any interest.

Meanwhile, my wife, then a travel agent, was "bridged" and her job gutted by online travel systems. She went to work in a hospital, with automation closing in fast behind her, like the *Lawnmower Man*, lowering her wages, taking away her benefits, and threatening to swallow her job.

I now enclose some of those writings from that era. Time has moved on. We are now busy outsourcing all the work that automation left us, which global automation now allows us to export to India and China. Watch for China particularly to exercise a baneful influence over us later on. But more to the point, I'm not sure what gainful employment will be left to our workers here. Are we racing towards the bottom? Will we turn ourselves into Third-World nations?

Shall we allow our precious Canadian universal medicare program to be shredded by what amount to predatory capitalists? Shall we watch an age of home ownership pass? How will we all afford old age in this heartless era of lowering what has come to be known as "the burden rate" (i.e., our wages)?

When will we blow the whistle and shout: "Stop!"

Automation Captures Corporate Travel (1998)

Automation and Business Darwinism

<https://www.angelfire.com/space2/light11/travel2.html>



At the beginning of the 1990s, defense cutbacks, corporate mergers, and global trade wars troubled America. In response American business turned to a particular social and economic philosophy to galvanize the corporation, make it “leaner and meaner,” and promote its survival in turbulent times.

Although more widely known as “social Darwinism,” I prefer to think of it as “business Darwinism.” It held that business was a struggle for existence (profitability, market share) in which only the strongest (nimblest, leanest, best adapted) survived. To create the leaner, meaner corporation, business-Darwinist leaders began shrinking employment across the economy through a process that came to be known as “downsizing.”

Using the trade press, consultants, and associations, business leaders came up with one approach after another to prosperity in the global market. Total quality was stressed. Just-in-time production was introduced. But, most of all, in the “nanosecond Nineties,” firms began to automate.

If asked to account for rising unemployment, business executives and economists pointed to the recessionary conditions they faced. But the impact of defense cutbacks was eventually overcome; corporate mergers calmed down for a while;

and America seemed to pick itself up and succeed in the global trade war. In general, recessionary conditions seemed to lift after 1991.

Despite these changes, the return of good times brought fewer jobs, or lower-paying jobs, than expected. America watched with rising alarm the advent of what came to be called “jobless recoveries,” a name that described but did not explain what was happening.

As downsizing spread, so did automation. As automation spread, so did downsizing. A peculiar relationship emerged between the two that had little to do with recessionary pressures. It began to be recognized that, whereas downsizing for simple cost savings could demoralize and overtax the remaining employees, replacing people with technology was a much cleaner solution.

Whereas downsizing unto itself came to be seen as an evil, automating was seen as a good. It allowed the corporation to survive in the unforgiving global market, said its supporters. It allowed the company at least to save some jobs instead of losing them all. In search of the lowest-cost, highest-productivity process, factories, plants, labs, warehouses, and offices around the country began to use automated systems wherever possible to replace labor.

BTN and the Business Travel Loop



By 1998, both corporate travel agent and airline reservationist, two categories of booking agents, were considered "bridged," "bypassed," "disintermediated," not needed any longer in business travel. A new technology had been invented, which I shall call the "automated travel system" or ATS, that did their work better and cheaper.

In the minds of the movers and shakers of the corporate travel world, if not in actual employment figures, corporate reservationists, in travel agency or airline, were gone as workers and as an occupational group. The entire conceptual shift described in these pages happened between 1996 and 1998. One could have followed it in a number of business travel journals; I chose to follow it in the pages of Business Travel News.

A magazine like BTN offers contemporaries one of the best windows into today's industrial events. It was deemed the voice of the American corporate travel industry. In its pages during this period, the mention that is made of the corporate travel agent is predominantly to predict his or her demise.

Overwhelmingly, the discussion centers around the new tools that computer-based technology offers the corporation. It was an exciting time for those who prospered. Said Kevin Mitchell, president of Business Travel Contractors Corporation: "Over the past three years ... fee- based agency pricing became fashionable; net fares, all

the rage; fresh ideas surfaced with new technology entrants; Internet, intranet, and extranet entered the lexicon; and technology associations, newsletters, and conferences proliferated." (1)

In the corporate travel sector, apart from the business press, four key players wrestled with the sea of change that resulted from technology's incursions:

- The booking agent (corporate travel agent and airline reservationist)
- The corporation (corporate travel manager and corporate traveler)
- The technology vendors (CRSs and ATSSs), and
- The travel-services suppliers (mainly the airlines, but also hotels, car rental firms, cruise ship lines, etc.).

1. The booking agent

The travel agent was one of the first to wrestle with complicated databases to research fares and book reservations. Travel agents were carrying out sophisticated online operations on computers, online, when most of the rest of us were wrestling with primitive word processors. The airlines, cruise ship lines, tour companies, hotels, and car rental firms they dealt with were awash in a sea of constantly-changing data, and the travel agent needed to be apprized of all of it.

The travel agency serves both vacation and corporate travelers. Some agencies mostly book vacation; others mostly corporate. Those that book mostly vacation will be far less affected by what is discussed in these pages. During this short period, technology and falling commissions combined to displace the corporate agent from his or her traditional middleman position in corporate booking. Left without revenue and replaced by software, the travel agency that did a lot of corporate bookings struggled to see its future.

The agent's closest counterpart was the airline reservationist, employed at downtown offices and the airport. Though they booked reservations and issued tickets, the rest of their work was different from the agent. They neither researched fares or other aspects of travel to the extent the agent did nor did they take care of special services. The airline showed itself interested in dooming its own employees by linking up with the corporate traveler, booking online, issuing e-tickets, and creating automated curbside kiosks for baggage drops.

Since its executioner was also its employer, one can imagine that very little was heard from the reservationists in the pages of the trade press. Their situation was different for corporate travel agents, who were defended by their employer, the independent agency, whose operations were threatened by automation. The airline reservationists seemed fated to go down without a voice raised in their defense. Precisely because scarce mention is made of them, I wish to draw attention to their plight here.

2. The corporation

The corporate travel manager is the gatekeeper (middleman?) between the corporate travel customer and the corporate travel agency and between both and senior management. Senior management entrusted the travel manager with the task of keeping travel safe and reliable, honest and inexpensive.

When the contract for lifetime job security collapsed in North America, nothing could have been better for a non-revenue generator than to have a stunning way of cutting costs. ATs provided that welcome tool. Automation solved many problems for travel managers during this period and so they switched allegiance from travel agent to travel software. Like the airlines, corporate travel managers and the travelers they served were leading travel technology boosters.

3. Technology vendors

Another group of travel-technology boosters were the technology vendors. They sold old and new systems. The vendors of old technology sold the computer reservations systems (CRSs) like Sabre, Apollo, and Amadeus that travel agents have been using for years to research fares and book reservations. The CRSs were sired by the airlines, who continue to look upon them as children that need protecting. CRS databases underlie many of the newer ATs, as one among a number of travel-information databases accessible through them.

The vendors of the new technology are the makers of the ATs; they are the new kids on the block. The ATs are windowized and operate online, taking advantage of sometimes more advanced technology than the older CRS who are regarded as having imperiously fallen behind the times. They "interface" with the CRSs. As I understand it, the CRSs are the engines underneath most of them. The ATs moved with the frontier from Internet to intranet to extranet -- from a worldwide online

network, to a secure in-house site, to a secure, direct link between buyer and seller. Their products were easy to learn; they sped up travel research and booking; and they tied in to adjacent technologies like "smart cards," which we shall have reason to look at later. Like medical-inventory packages or process-control systems, they grew to take in more and more functionality. Many groups began designing them from start-up technology companies and software giants, to computer-services firms and even mega-travel-agencies. This group had little native loyalty to airline or CRS. Like the airlines, its loyalty was to their customer -- the travel manager and the corporate traveler.

4. Travel suppliers

Although the airlines were only one among the suppliers of travel services, they were the trend- setters. The airlines merged and the car rental firms followed. The airlines cut commissions and the hotels followed. As a result of time constraints, I have restricted my attention here to the agent's relations with the airlines only.

Once numerous, since deregulation, the number of airlines has declined as companies partner and merge. Many discount airlines have shut down. Some giants have dropped by the wayside. More were injured in the "shoot-em-up" wars of the go-go Eighties. The ones who remain are aware of their power. They spring into action to protect investments like their CRSs. By reducing online commissions for any ATS but their own and upping online booking fees through their CRSs, they effectively put many of their competitors, the nascent ATS vendors, out of business.

By 1998, the "extranet," which airlines and travel manager labored hard to create, offered a direct link, via the World Wide Web, between buyer and seller. I would imagine that the achievement of a direct link would have been like a Holy Grail to the airlines. It was better than focused advertising or any other sales-incentive program. It tied the buyer directly to the seller, giving an incredible competitive advantage to travel suppliers.

Not surprisingly, then, the airlines were travel technology boosters during the period. Automation was good for them. In their eyes, the corporate agent (and perhaps their own booking agents) became non-performing, non-value-adding, redundant middlemen. "Direct links" spelled their end as a go-between. So it is at

this point that one can say that corporate travel agents had met their software replacement; i.e., that they had been bridged, bypassed, or "automated." If they will survive in some adapted form, I know not. But once the corporation and the airline were doing business together in a closed loop, the corporate travel agency was effectively eliminated as a middleman.

Footnotes

(1) Kevin P. Mitchell, "Distribution Reform Stalls," BTN, 9 June 1996, 10.

Corporate Travel Becomes a Struggle for Survival



If automation goes on in the background, then the ATS is the main background factor in corporate travel. It consists of a collection of software and hardware technologies which captured one erstwhile-reservationist function after another. In its early years, it offered corporate travelers a system of information on travel-related matters, accessible from their desktop. Fares could be investigated and background information found.

But this only whetted the corporate traveler's appetite. By the end of the period, it came to be considered an "end-to-end" or "total" system, handling fare research, reservation bookings, data capture, expense reporting, electronic ticketing, etc. Some ATS versions seemed scarcely to be mentioned in the pages of BTN before they were replaced. Desktop databases were overtaken by Internet services, which were hardly off the drawing boards before they were nudged by intranets, which were eclipsed in turn by extranets.

Representative was Unisys's 1997 offering, the Unisys Travel Alliance Services or UTAS system. BTN described it as "an end-to-end solution for agencies and corporate travel departments that includes automated booking, data warehousing and reporting, back office accounting and expense reporting processing." (1) A CRS company, TravelOne, touted a new and similar package: "an end-to-end corporate travel solution" with "a real-time, electronic reservations program for air,

hotel and car rental." (2) In the midst of describing his ATS, the CEO of TravelOne Jeff Harrow, was asked what would become of the corporate travel agent as a result of its advent.. Disarmingly, he answered: "We do not think of this as an agentless system, where all you have to do is make a reservation and you never have to speak to a travel agent again. It's not a replacement [for] the call center; it's an additional tool to add value for customers." (3) However, to bill it as an "automated booking system" and then argue that the user will not use it that way seems to me disingenuous.

By 1998, the ATS offered the corporation all the functions needed for easy, accountable travel. It was conveniently installed on the desktop computers of both travel manager and corporate traveler.

Business Travel Services president and general manager Sam Gilliland reviewed in BTN just how quickly the intranet ATS had won the hearts of the business traveler: "The idea of offering automated booking systems over internal, private Internet sites accessible only to corporate employees began to capture the interest of corporate travel managers this year and, six months later, 40 percent of potential customers are considering such a solution." (4) Said Lee Turner, BTI Americas exec VP: "I'd say that 25 percent of our biggest customers, the Fortune 500 customers, have intranets, and every single one of them is talking about putting a booking product on it." (5)

Even though the ATS eventually brought the airlines and the travel managers into a direct buyer-seller relationship, the airlines continued to use the services of travel agencies for vacation bookings and so could not afford to antagonize them outright.

We shall watch them here do a double dance characteristic of shifting loyalties, soothing the travel agency and then warning it of the impending demise of the corporate booking function. Here the dance is done by British Airways' regional head of sales, Dan Brewin. Brewin confessed that his airline had not wanted to take radical action in the corporate travel market, eliminating airline commissions altogether, because it might put travel agents out of business.

Whatever reassurance he thus offered travel agents, he quickly took away when he confessed that he would still be "happy to see a business-to-business relationship

develop between [British Airways] and corporate clients, and for them to be recompensing [travel] agents." (6) BA was publicly showing interest in what travel agents came to call "agency bypassing." The choice between losing commissions and being bypassed must have seemed like a no-win proposition to the travel agent.

Another demonstration of shifting loyalties was given by a marketing executive for an airline-owned CRS. Referring to travel agents, Amadeus' vice president David Jones asked a seminar in 1996: "Crisis -- what crisis?" (7) Travel agents still booked many forms of travel with Amadeus and its competitors, Sabre and Apollo, so the VP, like Brewin before him, needed to pacify travel agents while sounding the warning bell.

He began by addressing agents' fears. Despite doubts about their future, he said, they had "won hands down" the battle with the airlines to distribute tickets to corporate travel managers and corporate travelers. As proof of this assertion, he cited the fact that, in 1980, 53 percent of air sales in the United States were handled by agents while in 1996, the figure was up to 80 percent. Then came the warning. "In the future," he said, "the winner will be whoever offers the best means of electronic distribution." (8)

The attitude of Amadeus' VP illuminates the business-Darwinist tendency to see things in terms of a zero-sum game where the winner gains at the loser's expense. Implicit in his warning to the travel agent is the suggestion that the outcome of events will be inexorable and inescapable. And, when it occurs, it will not reflect the actions of culpable individuals and corporations, but instead some unavoidable law of life, whereby the weakest went to the wall.

Of course, all of this is false reasoning, masking callousness and greed. Human life is not a struggle for existence. Business becomes a struggle because we make it be that way, through business philosophies and the wayb they are covered in the trade press. But human life itself is a peaceful process and most humans desire peace. Nonetheless, the present business leaders see it as a struggle and we see the results in this article.

The technological frontier did not stop with the development of the ATS. Included among "the better means of electronic distribution" that Amadeus' VP referred to

was the "e-ticket," a development that seemed destined itself to be overtaken in the hyperchange of the period. "E-ticketing" or "paperless ticketing" was the practice of dispensing with the ticket issued by the agency or the airlines. Instead, the transaction was electronically recorded and a boarding pass was issued at the airline gate after proper card identification.

When the airlines instituted e-tickets, the innovation had a dramatic effect on the future of agency and airline personnel. E-tickets eliminated the need for them to issue tickets. On the books with American was "a test of curbside and terminal checkin using wireless technology." (9)

This was a second function performed by airline reservationists. If it succeeded, the two combined would eliminate the need for the corporate traveler to stop at the airline's airport desk for any reason. The two innovations thus greatly threatened their livelihood. The question Business Week asked about e-ticket machines in 1993 was undoubtedly on many a booking agent's mind at this time: "Will Travel Agents Get Bumped by These Gizmos?" (10)

BTN confirmed these effects in 1996: "The new American Airlines ticketless travel program will allow passengers to bypass ticketing stations at the airport by inserting a credit card or [corporate] card into an electronic reader, which prints out a seat assignment." (11)

This statement implies that the airport reservationist has all but been circumvented. Commented American Airlines senior vice president of marketing Mike Gunn: "To keep a paper document just to feel comfortable is ludicrous." (12) There is no expression of regret here that an entire section of his own company was about to be displaced.

Corporate travelers found e-tickets "convenient and flexible, [and] cheaper.... They are limited for now..., but they are no less than overwhelming in potential." (13) Again, the consensus built among the people BTN interviewed and "e-tickets" were proclaimed an unstoppable trend. Said Ely Lilly travel manager George Odom: E-ticketing "is the wave of the future, and our road warriors are using it already." (14)

Mega-travel-services agency American Express surveyed 1000 frequent flyers who found it better and faster "when checking in with an airport machine than with an

airport agent." (15) Agreed Sunbelt Motivation and Travel's information technology director Tom Levine:

I love e-ticketing, and in the Southwest market, where we are, our travelers are certainly in tune with the concept. It should add to the convenience factor for travelers, allow them to walk right up to the gate without having to remember to bring anything. I think it's the wave of the future. (16)

Technology seems to run in one speed and direction only -- fast-forward. As quickly as one innovation comes, it is superseded. The notion of e-tickets overtook that of paper tickets and was itself overtaken within a year by the concept of "smart cards." A "smart card" is a card with a computer chip capable of holding the corporate traveler's reservations, expenses, computer files, money, and identification. Predicted BTN's editor-in-chief David Myers in mid-1997: "Smart card applications ... promise to quickly supplant e-ticketing." (17)

The development of amenable technology went hand-in-hand with financial moves the airlines made that reduced the living travel agents made from bookings. The airlines, which had capped all commissions paid to travel agents for travel bookings in 1995, now lowered those commissions again for online bookings in 1996-97. In July 1996, Northwest and KLM airlines jointly announced they were lowering their commission on online bookings to 5 percent, capped at \$25 on domestic tickets and \$40 on international ones. Continental Airlines later joined them. (18)

Waiting some time before entering the fray, American Airlines upped the stakes in 1997 by announcing it would offer just a flat \$15 agency commission for both domestic and international tickets booked through an online service -- a figure far below the previous standard of 5 percent. Just days after American's announcement, United Airways matched their flat-fee structure and lowered the commission even further to \$10 per booking.

A British Airways sales exec confirmed that the airlines were using commission cuts to impact the balance of the travel equation. Said British Airways' U.S. sales and marketing vice president Dale Moss: "[British Airways'] commission restructuring was driven in part by the carrier's desire to get closer to the corporate customer." (19)

Moss admits that, through commission cuts, the airlines were actively manipulating events, to the extent that they could, in the direction of eliminating the middleman. Travel managers knew this. The travel manager for the Musicland Group, for instance, pointed out to her peers that "airlines are setting themselves up to work directly with the traveler, eliminating the need for agencies." (20) Direct links between traveler and airline, between customer and supplier, were the magic bullet that would get rid of the now-unwanted corporate travel agency.

BTN also knew: "The U.S. airline industry is moving away from its reliance on travel agencies for sales and distribution to large corporate buyers." (21) It wrote up every move in the drama. The latest commission reductions will "force travel managers to solidify relationships with Footnotes airlines, and rethink how and why they work with travel agencies." (22) Agreed a technology vendor, TravelNet chairman John Shoolery: The airlines' commission cut "sends a warning signal to those still planning on commission income as a viable revenue model for the future." (23) Consultant Samir Andraos, president of Ain International Management, predicted: "In the next few years, I see no commission at all. We're still advising corporations to move toward fees." (24)

The airlines, which wanted direct links, were helping the process by reducing the travel agents' revenues. Travel agents saw the drift. New recruits were reported not coming into travel training programs in 1998. Corporate travel agencies saw that they could no longer run on commission revenue alone. They must find another way of making their living. They had been automated.

Meanwhile, the circle of old friends abandoning corporate travel agents rapidly grew. In BTN, Richard Eastman, president of the Eastman Group, a travel technology vendor, predicted the breakup of the old order. "The industry is finally beginning to experience the evolution of the travel distribution paradigm that many have been long projecting," he said. "In 1997, expect to see the emergence of a new path dependence to replace or supplement the CRS/agent structure." A beneficiary of his own predictions, he concluded that a "new buyer-driven era demands the speed of digital solutions." (25)

Footnotes

- (1) Mary Ann McNulty, "Tech Outsourcers Target Travel," Business Travel News, 8 Dec. 1997, 3.
- (2) Stefani O'Connor, "TravelOne Teams with E-Travel for Full System," BTN, 5 Aug. 1996,
- (3) Loc.Cit.
- (4) Cheryl Rosen, "Industry Goes Intranet," BTN, 19 Aug. 1996, 26.
- (5) Loc. Cit.
- (6) Jay Campbell and Amon Cohen, "BA, SAS Cut Commissions," BTN, 8 Dec, 1997, 44.
- (7) Amon Cohen, "Amadeus, Amex Show Int'l Buyers New MIS Software," BTN, 9 June 1996, 8.
- (8) Loc. Cit.
- (9) (Jay Campbell, "AA Testing Smart Cards," BTN, 29 July 1996, 2.).
- (10) Keith Alexander, "Will Travel Agents Get Bumped by These Gizmos?" Business Week, 28 June 1993, 72.)
- (11) Jay Campbell, "AA Testing Smart Cards," BTN, 29 July 1996, 2.
- (12) Loc. Cit.
- (13) Jay Campbell, "E-Tix Winning Favor, Usage," BTN, 27 Oct. 1997, 1.
- (14) Odom in Jay Campbell, "E-Tix Accord Set," BTN, 28 Oct. 1996, 33.
- (15) Jay Campbell, "E-Tix Winning Favor, usage," BTN, 27 Oct. 1997, 1.
- (16) Cheryl Rosen, "Continental Intros Group E-Tix," BTN, 19 Aug. 1996, A14.
- (17) David Meyer, "A Very Good Year," BTN, 26 May 1997, 3.
- (18) Cheryl Rosen, "Northwest Caps Online Commissions," BTN, 29 July 1996, 1.
- (19) Jay Campbell and Amon Cohen, "BA, SAS Cut Commissions," BTN, 8 Dec, 1997, 44.
- (20) Ruth Levine, "Airlines Can't Replace Agencies," BTN, 27 Oct. 1997, 12.
- (21) Jay Campbell, "Pan Am Rises From Ashes," BTN, 5 Aug. 1996, 6.
- (22) John Heilner, "Cuts Recast Agency, Airline and Buyer Roles," BTN, 27 Oct. 1997, 12.
- (23) Shoolery in Cheryl Rosen, "AA Imposes Online Fee," BTN, 14 April 1997, 6.
- (24) Andraos in Jay Campbell, "Canadians Uncap Borders," BTN, 19 Aug. 1996, 6.
- (25) "Intranet Footnotes to Booking Solutions," BTN. 7 Oct. 1996, 10.

The Travel Managers Abandon the Agent

BTN itself was leading the pack, rather than following the leader, in promoting the "dream of automating the travel process." (1)

Imagine a business world where inner- and outer-office networking, communication and information dissemination [are] conducted predominantly via computer networks, instantly, via the Internet and intranets, where employees are reliant on the Internet within their work environment, as well as during their leisure time, for news, business intelligence, entertainment and consumer purchasing; where commercial and social interaction is facilitated by an immensely adaptable, entertaining and easy-to-use medium -- the Internet -- by everyone and everybody. Is this picture still a futurist's vision? In fact, it's starting to look like a fine description of the way things are today. ...

Accessible with little more than a laptop, an Internet or intranet connection and a Web browser, [ATSS] offer managers and travelers a wealth of functionality and flexibility in a computing environment that has already gained widespread acceptance and usage, without the closed circuit and high cost that accompanies distributed systems. Companywide distribution of travel policies can be facilitated via the corporate intranet with ease, while implementation and tracking will occur with reservations filters and electronic queuing. (2)

BTN called the demand for automation "hotter than Dallas in August." (3) Regardless of the fact that "no one has the perfect end-to-end technology solution," the travel buyers that BTN interviewed at the 1996 National Business Travel Association's annual conference demonstrated "how real the demand is for these products." (4) It polled travel managers and reported "a greater eagerness for technology than even most vendors had been predicting ... despite the fact that many promising products are not yet ready for harvest." (5) BTN chastised those who remained on the sidelines.

The components for travel systems from booking through expense reporting that business travel buyers will see on the NBTA show floor this week demonstrate that a new era has arrived. New software and more secure online connections are making it possible to automate the entire business travel process, and those travel

suppliers and buyers who are not getting ready to change the way they do business accordingly are already behind. (6)

According to BTN's version, the travel managers were not being pulled by automation; they were actively pushing it.

As with most industries facing the growth and widespread use of the Internet as an important and powerful business tool, corporate travel managers are adapting to the Net's maturity in leaps and bounds. They are not only validating the potential of this much-hyped medium, but pushing it forward to new heights and changing the landscape of travel management and technology forever. (7)

In 1997 the magazine cautioned "travel managers who have not yet jumped into the pool ... [should] quickly get their feet wet, and those that have tested the water [should] consider accelerating their plans." (8) It quoted people from all over the industry marveling at the new technology. Colleen Guhuin, corporate travel manager for Texas Instruments, for example, sent out a survey to her "road warriors" that showed they "wanted automation and they wanted it now." She declared:

There isn't any one product that has it all right now. But we aren't going to wait until we find the perfect one. We can't. There's too much money going down the drain by not going with an automated product. The difference in a transaction fee to the agencies versus a transaction fee on an automated system is quite substantial. (9)

The corporate travel agency now having been marginalized, onetime friends and colleagues of corporate travel agents had reached the point of representing using them as pouring money down the drain.

According to BTN, automation became one of the industry's "best practices."

A number of the changes [in recommended best practices] reflect the increasing use of automation in every aspect of travel, from booking and ticketing through expense reporting. For example, a best-practice travel policy should now include policy support through electronic bookings. Included in the best practices for selecting an agency are offering alternative methods to book reservations and supporting integration of automated systems. And for communicating travel policy, a best practice is one that uses an intranet or Internet site to assist travelers. (10)

What drove automation was cost-savings. Declared General Motors' corporate travel manager Kevin Killeen in the face of airline commission cuts, "we are all trying to reduce costs." (11) Echoed travel industry consultant Harold Seligman: "Everybody is looking at cost containment. If you eliminate a middle man, you reduce costs." (12) Corporate travel agents were now middlemen who must be bypassed. BTN saw ATSS as the answer to bypassing them and thus lowering costs: "Businesses are looking to buy booking through expense reporting systems because senior management and frequent travelers are demanding them, the potential savings are huge and the return on investment will cover the cost of implementation probably within 12 months and certainly within 24." (13) Studies Unisys conducted with American Express indicated that ATSS would lower company booking costs by as much 30 percent. (14) Travel-management consultants ran other tests that showed that the process of selecting an airline fare through electronic booking was 18 percent cheaper than through telephone booking. (15)

Thus, the corporate travel agent had become the middleman to eliminate. Managing director of Global Airline Associates Jon Ash declared in relation to airline mergers: "The guy in the middle is potentially in trouble. ... It will be interesting to see who gets left out." (16) Texas Instruments's Guhuin applied the argument to travel: "The fewer middlemen involved in the travel transaction, the more efficient it is going to be." (17) Some travel managers wanted ATSS, not only to circumvent the travel agency, but also to shrink their own reservations staff. One pharmaceuticals giant expected a 30 to 40 percent efficiency gain in processing reservations within two years "that will tie back to a reduction in headcount with our onsite [booking office]." (18) Their own travel-management office was now the middleman, as the idea of eliminating needless staff spread.

BTN lined up industry insiders to show that travel agents were no longer needed. Kelly Renner of Via World Network, whose ATS product would benefit from an increase in corporate online booking, declared that for "simple point-to-point itineraries, you don't need the services of an intermediary." She listed the benefits of online booking with a technology vendor: It "saves the airline the cost of CRS booking fees, ARC processing fees, travel agency commissions and overrides -- all numbers that can be added up and placed squarely on the negotiating table between the travel manager and the preferred vendor." (19) When the airlines upped online

booking fees, they spared their own CRSs and ATSS from the increase, showing that the move was directed against the new technology vendors, rather than being cost-driven. An ATS not owned by an airline during this period seemed to enjoy a brief window of opportunity before it too was driven under in the atmosphere of cutthroat competition.

In 1997, BTN quoted Else Becher, chairwoman of the Norwegian Travel Managers Association as saying: "I think soon we will not need travel agents." BTN summarized the rest of her words: "Electronic travel management systems will enable corporates to handle many travel agency functions in-house in the near future." (20) Jim Kimball, director of corporate travel for Huntsman Chemical, was equally blunt: "Why should we pay a commission to the travel agent? Many of us are planning to take agency services in-house anyway." (21) Austrian Airlines business travel manager Gerhard Aigner rejected the agency link. "The service we cover through the travel agents now is no longer worth 9 percent. The system does not work anymore." (22)

From the supply side, the airlines were not immune to giving the travel agent a push whenever they could. In designing its ATS, United Airlines reported it had dropped a feature that would have linked the company to the agency for ticketing because "in our research, the need for a travel agency didn't hit the radar screen." (23) British Airways tried once again to do the double dance -- preserving travel-agent goodwill while distancing itself from them. Said Dale Moss, their U.S. sales and marketing vice president: "For years, our relationship with many corporate customers [has] been through the travel agency.... My view going forward is to have a great relationship with the travel agent and a great relationship with the corporation, but not one through the other. The travel agent is a very important part of the chain, but he's not the customer." (24) The "great relationship" he has with the agent will probably be in vacation travel; the great relationship with the travel manager will be in corporate. His distinction thus promotes disintermediation in corporate while trying to preserve agent goodwill in vacation.

A process comes to life for us when it has a name. A technology vendor introduced a name for the process by which travel agents were being eliminated from the loop. IBM's worldwide corporate travel solutions manager Declan Borland called the process "disintermediation." (25) He seemed to suggest that the concept was

already well-known in certain circles. Here is his statement: "We looked into providing direct links, and though the concept does have the elements of classic disintermediation, our travel procurement folks said it wouldn't give us the consolidated data they need from the corporate travel perspective." (26) Presumably, if their data-capture technology had been more advanced, IBM too would have joined the feeding frenzy.

Three months later, BTN showed that the term "disintermediation" had entered the language when it offered its sympathies to the corporate travel manager involved in the process.

While it seems everything is up for grabs in these new digital relationships, there's no such thing as a free lunch. Both sides are quickly discovering the challenges disintermediation presents for travel management. Linking directly may provide one of the greatest opportunities for cost savings, but it also creates the largest headaches -- disruptions in policy compliance, data integration and management reporting, not to mention all those delicate agency financial arrangements. (27) By 1998, the first extranets or secure direct links with the airlines had been established, eliminating the middleman. BTN showcased corporate travel managers, like Chevron's global travel manager Nancy Godfrey, embracing extranets.

Agreed [Godfrey], "Yes, we are looking at direct links with airline, hotel and car rental suppliers.... I expect to have a direct link to an airline by the end of 1998 -- and maybe we'll be lucky and have more than one." (28)

At around the same time, BTN spotlighted the "'more than five' corporate customers [who] already have or are building direct links to airlines, all under 'very strict non-disclosure agreements.'" (29) Thomson Consumer Electronics told BTN a few months later the history of its establishment of direct links to the airline. We may want to listen to that account in detail to get a picture of the everyday details of the process travel managers went through to win acceptance for agency bypassing.

For Thomson Consumer Electronics, the choice of the Worldspan system comes almost three years after [its travel manager] first began looking into travel booking systems, begun after [Sabre] first announced it would be developing a system at the

1995 NBTA conference. Intrigued, [she] approached Worldspan and signed on for Travel Shopper, an e-mail based, off-the-shelf system developed by the CRS in the '80s. A year later, Worldspan "started seriously looking at building a product and putting programmers to work on it," [she] said. By November 1995, thanks to an incentive program that rewarded users with free hotel room nights and other prizes, [she] had moved 105 travel arrangers -- and 10-15 percent of Thomson's domestic travel -- off the phones and onto e-mail.

"I wanted to test the waters and see if we would even be interested in automated booking," [she] said. And, added [the domestic corporate travel manager], the early start helped identify travelers and travel arrangers interested in and accustomed to technology, who now will serve as the first testers of Trip Manager.

The success of the early system convinced not only the travel department, but senior management as well. "Once it was in place and the commission cuts continued to come, the executive committee, which is made up of the heads of all the departments, said okay, this is good. Now let's improve on it," [she] said. ...

In internal beta testing at Thomson since September, Trip Manager this week will be rolled out to about 300 travelers and travel arrangers in the United States and Mexico. ... Thomson again plans an incentive program to encourage change in travelers' behavior. [She] will ask her airline partners for free tickets to offer as raffle prizes for online bookers in return for linking the Thomson booking site to the airline Web site. With the raffle as a carrot and the mandate as a stick, she expects to move 30-35 percent of Thomson's \$40 million domestic air volume onto Trip Manager. (30)

A chorus of voices could be found to agree with Texas Instruments's Guhuin that "direct links definitely are going to be the way of the future." (31) When British travel agents fought back against the process of disintermediation, BTN commented that "Americans who already have been through the same pain may regard this as Luddite inability to accept inevitable change." (32)

That depended on where the Americans sat. By this time, the discussion had reached a level of sophistication and the outcome had been sufficiently sold to travel managers that little more thought was given to the fate of the travel agent.

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The Travel Agents Respond



Commission cuts, online booking fees, expense reporting software, e-tickets -- corporate travel agents seemed under attack from every direction during this period. What of the view from where corporate travel agents themselves sat? Said the travel magazine *Smart Business*:

Consider the Internet from the travel agent's perspective: Direct online booking threatens your reservation and ticketing business. Automated policy compliance grabs your backoffice work. Global access to data robs you of control and undermines your value to clients. ... Rising to that challenge is more than a question of growth for corporate travel agents in the age of the Internet. It's a matter of survival. (1)

Kevin Mitchell, the head of the Business Travel Contractors Corp., captured the sense of powerlessness agents must have felt.

Travel agencies have had incomes cut twice in as many years, without notice. Most travel agencies now feel virtually powerless in an equation where major airlines exercise market power to shift costs and dictate terms and conditions. While few would dispute an airline's right to change its commission structure, no business

responds well to unexpected news that impacts its investment strategies and earnings, and disrupts its best customers. (2)

Hal Rosenbluth, president of mega-agency Hal Rosenbluth International, predicted that the smaller firms would find it hardest to adapt. He foresaw the demise of many of the smaller firms.

For those who are trying to engage in the corporate arena, anybody with less than \$100 million in air sales is going to have a struggle. They just don't have the technology, the financial and the human resources and the deals in place with the suppliers to compete with the larger regional or mega agencies. If they couldn't restructure their arrangement with their clients on a fee basis, they're struggling because they effectively lost about 20 percent of their revenue. (3)

Travel agents who responded to this accelerating technological revolution spoke into something of a vacuum. They were no longer needed by a large group of the most prestigious corporate travelers, many of them Fortune 100, 500, and 1,000 companies. They were no longer needed by their former colleagues in airline circles. And their colleagues made no bones about wanting them removed from the loop.

Some responded by leaving the business voluntarily, disheartened by prospects in the Age of Automation. Revealed Rosenbluth, "travel management firms are having a hard time finding good agents. Many good travel service associates have left the industry scared off by their companies talking incessantly about technology. Technology talk, not the reality, has created a problem as much as it has solved one." (4)

Those who stayed responded in a predictably confused manner, making their case to each other and to business travel. Some reported events with a sense of dread. Here is Travel Counselor magazine (published by the same company that publishes BTN -- Miller-Freeman) on the subject.

Reports of the death of the travel agency industry may be premature -- but they're getting awfully hard to avoid. Crack open a magazine or tap into the Internet these

days and you're almost guaranteed to feel the cold wind blowing.

Consider the London-based Economist magazine.... In travel, it said, "Expect a growth of on-line bookings. In Britain alone, the market is set to grow from less than \$1 million in 1997 to \$1 billion by 2002. This will drive many travel agents out of business."

... A dispatch from Communications Week made the e-mail rounds on the Internet last month, reporting that the president of "a major national travel agency" was predicting "a massive downsizing" as a result of Internet competition. (5)

Some responded angrily at the travel consumers. Significantly, the same 1996 NBTA annual conference which heralded the new era in travel automation voted down a proposal for the fifth year in a row to allow travel agencies into the organization. When some members asked why, BTN reported: "[Opponents] pointed to ongoing competition between travel managers and agents, and fears of having NBTA overrun by overwhelming numbers of agents."

BTN covered the upset response of some mega-agencies who were exhibiting at the show. Even though they were producing ATSS too, having jumped on the bandwagon, as an agency, they sensed their growing isolation within corporate travel.

With big bucks invested in sponsoring events and taking booth space at the show, several participating mega-agency executives were not overly pleased. Said one, "See this badge? It says non-member. I have to wear it. You know what it really says. 'You're outside. You don't belong.'" (7)

Others responded angrily to the suppliers.

But when hotels followed suit with their own commission cuts, one travel agent's indignation spilled over. Beverley Bouchard, president of Traveling Inc., said she had complained to the hotel manager about a \$32 commission on a \$700 booking for a Promus hotel. Bouchard said the manager told her he hoped the limit would not affect their relationship. She replied "Give me a break. Do you think I'm going

to work for you for nothing?" (8)

Others took events philosophically but reported a loss of trust. Jack Alexander, CEO of WorldTravel Partners, contributed a witty but accurate reading, calling it a "'trussed' issue." (9) Travel agents were the turkeys, trussed, basted, and served up for the corporate-travel Thanksgiving dinner. He summarized the bleak developments:

It appears that the travel agent's lot in life is going to get worse before it gets better. The market thinks that we have been paid too much.... The airlines no longer need a "rebate buffer" to avoid corporate discounting that is commonplace today. And travelers can easily book themselves through on-line options directly with the carriers. (10)

Trust appeared to be a casualty all around in these years, as it is wherever uncontrolled automation is allowed to capture work. This case study shows automation not capturing a few jobs, but eliminating whole occupations (corporate and airline booking agents).

Observed BTN: "The airline industry suffers from deep mistrust among many parties. Airlines don't trust travel agencies, consumers don't trust airlines, corporations don't trust airlines and travel agencies may never trust their airline distribution 'partners' again." Rather incongruously, given its own role in matters, it reminded its readers: "Mistrust is very costly." (11)

While the smaller agencies lacked the resources or financial position to drive technology, some of the largest travel agencies -- the mega-agencies -- became technology vendors themselves. (12) "We have now become a software provider, which is a bit unusual for a travel company," said the president of mega-agency Carlson-Wagonlit. (13) This was not a solution that would help agency employees. It simply drove the automation process further. BTN covered the trend:

An increasing number of travel management companies today are positioning themselves as total solution providers and doing whatever it takes to deliver on the promise. From building their own T&E [i.e., travel and entertainment] expense software to private labelling a third-party system to serving as value-added retailers to acting as technology consultants, travel management companies are expanding

into expense management and systems integration. (14)

American Express chose briefly to use its clout to fight back against what it perceived as its new business opponents. After their commission cuts, AmEx eliminated schedules, fares, and availability for United, Northwest and KLM from its online website and America Online. "We continue to list American and Continental, as they've recognized the agency services we're providing," said spokeswoman Melissa Abernathy. "We feel the commissions that United and Northwest are offering don't cover our operating costs." (15)

Of the ordinary troops who chose to soldier on, some chose a conciliatory path, putting blame behind them. Said Caldwell Associates travel consultant Susan Stowe: "There has been a lot of emotion about change and resentment that the airlines acted unilaterally. As an industry, we need to move beyond that. We have been confronted with a permanent change in the three-way financial relationship among airlines, agencies and corporate customers." (16)

Most of the nucleus who remained supported travel-agency fees for service, to replace unpredictable sources of revenue like airline commissions and overrides. Reports of moves in this direction were closely watched, wherever they happened. Typical of updates was this one:

Canadian travel managers and agents predicted that the caps would speed the transition from revenue-share contracts to fee-based contracts, transforming the [travel] agencies role. Sources also said the move will spur net fare deals and a greater focus on cost controls. (17)

Warned Carlson-Wagonlit: "Customers ... are expecting us to come up with this concept on how to manage travel, research it and come up with the best solutions. In the past, we did that for free. No more." (18) Agreed Mike Spinelli, president and CEO of the American Society of Travel Agents:

There are many financial options available, one of which is a direct payment of a travel agent management fee that eliminates the need to renegotiate their agency compensation package every time the airlines decide to alter commissions.

An agency management fee is a great option for buyers because it enables the agency and the corporation to work together to determine the exact services needed and a forum in which to apply cuts. This type of compensation package creates an open business relationship with no surprises brought on by a change to the commission structure. (19)

He denied that corporate travel managers would leave travel agencies, who were their traditional partner in business.

The recent airline commission cut by the carriers means one thing for the business traveler -- higher costs. ...

However, does this latest cut mean that an overwhelming number of corporations are going to move away from using travel agents and make their own travel arrangements? Absolutely not.

The instruments that would allow corporations to book their own travel -- 800 numbers, direct-booking software, the Internet, etc. -- have been in place for years, yet an overwhelming number of corporations continue to use travel agent services. Why is this? For the same reason that travel agents book such a high percentage of vacation travel -- it makes good financial sense. Corporate buyers recognize the exorbitant costs associated with booking travel themselves (limited options, unproductive hours spent on hold), and they've come to rely on their corporate travel agency to implement travel policies to save the company money, negotiate preferred supplier relationships and save time, and provide corporate reporting that tracks expenses and savings. (20)

Agencies stressed the service that agents provided as the value they added to the travel equation. Said mega-agency CEO Hal Rosenbluth, "while technology is important, it will never replace good travel service associates." (21) Declared Roger Black at Carlson Wagonlit in Travel Counselor magazine: "No one wants to see us disappear. Everyone wants to see us sell more of their particular product." (22) His prediction was optimistic; it may have been naive.

Said travel management consultant Ralph Brown: "In 1997, most companies on the leading edge will be doing electronic bookings. We have to adapt to that." (23) Adaptation for those who could not become technology vendors meant cost-

cutting. Everyone looked for ways to provide better service at lower cost. Advised Aquarius Travel president and CEO Domenic Pugliares:

Along with the natural desire to keep up with trends and technologies, there is a basic pocketbook reason for all of us in the business to be innovative: When Delta Airlines capped commission for all domestic flights at \$50, it has to be considered a harbinger of things to come throughout the industry. Now, the goals are not simply to provide a level of information and service at an acceptable cost. The new realities demand better service, better information and lower costs. (24)

Every way of cost-cutting was examined. Ely Lilly travel manager George Odom urged his fellows: "We're saying we can be smarter in the way we buy things. Can we bundle it together? Can we break it apart? Can we bring different groups together to buy things at the same or better quality at a lower price?" (25) Asked Kevin Mitchell, president of Business Travel Contractors Corp.:

Can your agency survive and make a profit with 8 percent commissions? Probably - if it has reengineered its procedures [and] eliminated unnecessary staff positions. ... Have you streamlined internal and agency processes as much as possible? Are you using electronic tickets? You may want to accelerate review and decision making on automated self-booking and T&E reporting systems. Once you achieve significant usage of e-tickets and self-booking, agency fees should be reduced. (26)

Not all industry observers were certain that corporate travel agencies would survive the advent of ATS technology. Said Jere Glover, chief counsel for advocacy at the Small Business Administration, after the 1996-7 round of commission cuts: "We're worried. We are concerned ... that we are spreading fewer dollars among more businesses. ... It's too early to know what impact that is going to have and whether the industry can adjust." (27)

Technological developments like ATSs, T&E systems, e-tickets, and smart cards pleased the corporate traveler or the travel manager, who found them faster, easier, and less expensive. From where they sat, technology was an unmitigated good. Therefore the application of technology and the demise of the agency and airline booking agent was seen through rose-tinted glasses.

The machines did indeed do the job better. That fact is not disputed. It is whether we can afford to eliminate group after group, without any thought being given to their ongoing well-being, whose only crime is to have been bridged by the computer. Does automation's capture of work go on forever? At what point does it end? And who will be left standing? The travel manager? He or she is also a middleman. The technology vendor? The airlines have the ability to price in a predatory fashion to eliminate new start-ups as easily as it did the agents.

When the machine captures all the work that it does better and very few people are left with gainful employment, when sales fall because consumers have no money, when government revenues tumble because taxpayers are getting poorer or paying nothing, will the shoe fit then? Or will it begin to pinch so much that more and more friends of automation will cast it off and pine again for a business landscape full of gainfully-employed people?

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- (3) Hal F. Rosenbluth in "Travel Agencies," *BTN*, 26 May 1997, 14.
- (4) Hal F. Rosenbluth, "Keep Focus on Service," *BTN*, 14 Apr. 1997, 10.
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- (6) Cheryl Rosen, "Industry Goes Intranet," *BTN*, 19 Aug. 1996, 26.
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Reflections on a Kill



We've watched business Darwinism in action, where the strongest have survived (the airlines and the corporate travel manager) and the weaker have gone to the wall (the corporate and airline booking agent). What surprised me in reading the pages of BTN was a lack of innocence. The picture one carries in one's mind, which of course is naive, is that displacement is an unintended consequence of automation.

But in the pages of BTN, we hear travel-industry insiders discuss displacement of the travel agent as very much an intended and foreseen consequence. We see BTN consciously promoting the trend, oblivious to the toll in human suffering. Automation was deployed as a calculated means of "distintermediating" the travel agent.

People are here shown pushing a technology that drives a whole occupational group out of the market. This is not a factory closing or even a small town's main industry moving to Mexico; it is nation-wide displacement. This practice cannot be moral or desirable.

There are no statistics yet that I am aware of that tell us how many travel agents and airline reservationists have lost or will lose their jobs as the result of

automating booking, ticketing, and expense reporting. It might be in the interests of the travel agencies to furnish the public with a statistical portrait of who was displaced and what ultimately happened to them.

This brief glimpse of the onstage conversation that led to undetermined offstage action leaves us with only the tenor of the talks, their thrust and direction. We will need to hear from corporate insiders as to what the actual policies of the airlines and the corporate travel scene were if we are to know what decisions were made behind closed doors and why.

Whether we are happy or sad about the events depicted here depends on where we sit. Dropping people from the work equation was good for some and bad for others. Ultimately it will prove bad for all. In the beginning of automation's application to any industry, the only ones who seem to care are the displaced themselves.

Even governments act like businesses, practicing automation and downsizing. In F.D.R.'s time, government was the employer of last resort, lifting its citizens out of depression. Now, government matches the callousness of business.

Some influential people who once favored predatory, Darwinist business practices can be seen abandoning their views and coming around to address the ruin they are causing. Here are two examples. Morgan Stanley chief economist Stephen S. Roach has recently changed his mind on the subject of downsizing. Where he once thought that it held promise, he now thinks it may have hurt companies and the economy. He speaks of downsizing as "hollowing out" the modern company. Says Roach:

Plant closings, layoffs and other forms of downsizing have certainly had the effect of providing short-term boost to earnings. However, where [they] will also drive lasting productivity enhancement is highly debatable. ... Labor can't be squeezed forever, and Corporate American can't rely on the 'hollowing' tactics of downsizing to maintain market share in an expanding global economy. ... I'm now having second thoughts as to whether we have reached the promised land. (1)

Indeed, downsizing is being increasingly criticized for stripping a company of marketable high-performers, who take a generous settlement and confidently move

on. It also sheds the newest blood, depriving the company of their energy and enthusiasm. It has been known to remove a company's corporate memory. In its wake it leaves shell-shock, angst, and bitterness. Since automation is one cause of downsizing, what Roach says about downsizing could equally be said about automation. If Roach's expression of discontent causes others around him to question downsizing, then the democratic process of dissent and change will have been helped.

Another voice who questions downsizing is Alan Downs, a psychologist and former personnel director, who used to preside over "corporate executions." "All told," says Downs, "I personally fired hundreds of employees and planned for batch firings of thousands more." He now says: "Management uses layoffs to lower wages and make a quick profit." He reveals even shadier reasons for downsizing, giving us valuable insider information.

Downsizing is not just a matter of shortsightedness, but of self-interest. Wall Street believes downsizing equals lower wages and bigger profits, and rewards CEOs who announce big layoffs by driving up their company's stock process. Since CEOs typically receive big chunks of stock, their net worth spirals up, just as their unlucky workers are wondering how they're going to make the mortgage payment.
(2)

He confesses to being filled with regret looking back on the downsizing movement he was involved in. This gradual movement away from social ills like inappropriate automation and downsizing reminds us how democracy works. If these two downsizing advocates could turn away from the practice and come to their senses, then so can people now engaged in harmful automation.

Automation will continue enriching some and impoverishing others until we as a public decide to stop it. How do we stop it? We have never been a fascist society whose opponents are taken out and shot. Our processes of disagreement have been, by global scales, domestically peaceful. Democratic dissent gradually escalates. It does not vilify its opponents, but warns them before acting and welcomes all from their ranks who have come to their senses.

invite us to begin a gradually-escalating campaign against business Darwinism (a specious, erroneous philosophy), and against inappropriate and harmful

automation. I invite historians, economists, sociologists, and journalists to speak out. The other issues that confront us as an economy must be addressed as well and the list is long. But I invite us to begin the cooperative work that will set out these important issues and lead to their solution.

As a democratic society, we express our dissent through the ballot box, consumer/legal action, and public forums. As voters, I encourage us to bring the issue of automation to the attention of the parties we support and not to vote for candidates insensitive to it. As consumers, I encourage us to explore peaceful, legal ways of bringing home to leading companies our disapproval of their business practices.

These could include boycotting the products or services of those who practice harmful automation -- in this case, the airlines, whose commission caps, online booking fees, and other practices are at heart predatory. Airlines have hidden behind deregulation as if it were a blanket that covers harmful practices. But the deregulated economy has led to a two-tiered society, to widespread and growing unemployment, and to callousness towards the technologically-displaced worker.

It's time for the pendulum to swing back. As a public, I urge us to discuss these issues wherever there is a forum and create a consensus on them. I invite us to use polls creatively to see whether our efforts are successful and to apply pressure to politicians to act. Even opinion polls opposing inappropriate automation would be enough to turn our political leaders around. I urge us to ask our then-awakened legislators to pass measures that outlaw harmful automation, just as it passed laws that ended toxic polluting and insider trading.

The careless and inappropriate application of technology is a phase our society is living through. When the public are well-enough informed and roused by the harmful side effects of automation, they will demand that the situation be corrected. When that happens, the end of inappropriate and harmful automation will occur. I am certain of it.

People are awakening to the harmful side of the genie we have let out of the bottle. It is just a question of time before they join together to put a stop to it. It is my hope that, in looking in the mirror at ourselves as we did here, we will reflect on the course we as a society are taking, turn the wagons around and go another way.

Footnotes

- (1) From Preamble Collaborative Website (www.rtk.net/preamble).
- (2) Alan Downs, “The Wages of Downsizing,” Mother Jones Magazine Website (bsd.mojones.com/mother_jones) Cf. Alan Downs, Corporate Executions. New York, etc.: AMACOM, 1995. For the best single treatment of the agenda of technological restructuring and the global automation of work, seen from a Canadian perspective but still the best treatment around, see Heather Menzies, Whose Brave New World? The Information Highway and the New Economy. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1996.

Conclusion: Eight Years Since Parksville



The process that our drive through Parksville awakened in me led me at times to contact computer course instructors, labor unions, business leaders, and finally a labor economist for the federal government.

When I said to her that automation was not necessarily benign and could in fact be taking away the jobs of many, the harried economist said, "Yes, we've been wondering when a member of the public would call and say just that. I know what you're saying and I'm not allowed to talk about it." (I reconsidered the notion of a career with the government in that one brief moment.)

I landed my last editorial assignment with a forestry engineering firm when I tried to raise the subject to awareness. They had asked me to serve as a consultant to the electrical engineering department on a new brochure.

At our first meeting, no one would actually venture to say: "This is what we do; this is the work we want to go after." The truth was that, like an individual, the department itself had been technologically displaced, put out of work. The rest of the company was supporting it while it found itself a new job. The brochure was its resume.

But the officers of the department hadn't been willing to publicly acknowledge the situation. They made their living with technology and could not find a way to say

that perhaps it had pushed them out of work, as it had many of the drafters in the company. The conversation waffled back and forth: shall we keep the brochure as it is or shall we change it?

I felt that they were paying me to advise them and so the proper thing to do was to bring a little truth to the situation. I thought to myself: They'll probably pay me this time around, but never have me back. I took my future in my hands and asked: "Are not the paper machine makers now designing their own machine rooms?" A silence descended on the room. It was as if someone had said the unmentionable in public.

Because of personal computers and programs like AutoCAD, paper machine builders could now afford to hire a few designers to work up the whole of the machine room. In former days, banks of drafters working on drafting tables designed it, here in the offices of the consulting engineer. But no longer. There was no need to hire a consultant when the machine maker could just as easily and more cheaply design it, using AutoCAD. And since the client was obliged to deal with the machine maker and was not obliged to deal with the consultant, why not try this new and inexpensive approach?

So the services of expensive engineers were no longer needed. The machine maker had essentially cut the client's labor costs. A whole firm of long-standing global reputation was made redundant, downsized, and dismissed with in a single stroke. Their electrical department was hardest hit. I continued: "Isn't it true then that most of your work is in modifications?" Yes, they quickly agreed, modifications. Let us have a modifications brochure. There was no longer a log jam in approaching the brochure. All were now enrolled in the task.

And though they never invited me back, ending a business relationship of nearly a decade, just the expression of the truth was worth it. Here a whole firm had been hit by the hardware maker's assumption of adjacent tasks, which computers and programs made it easy to do. The Darwinists would say, let the firm go to the wall.

But I had known these people for many years. My father had also worked for the firm. They meant no one any harm. They all had spouses and children to go home to. In a time frame too short to permit response or adjustment, the machine maker had eaten their lunch. Now there they sat, their laptops indicating with a beep the arrival of e-mail and they themselves staring displacement in the face.

Others besides myself found that opposing technology at this time could get you into the soup. Said two authors who spoke out in 1985: "Many who earn their living or their fortune from high technology will condemn as anti-technology every attempt to question high-tech innovation, as if technology and industry were neutral." Technology was anything but neutral, they added. ⁽¹⁾ The application of a technology that strips work away from people may be neutral to those who apply it, but it is not to those they apply it to.

A Toronto researcher for a citizens group wrote in 1995:

"A casualty of the race to compete in the new global economy is the value and dignity of human work. For many workers today, a secure full-time job that challenges them and uses their skills is a thing of the past. Precarious part-time or temporary work is as much as they can hope for.

"Many others are simply left on the sidelines in the struggle to find employment, as the creation of new jobs is outpaced by the elimination of jobs through downsizing and restructuring. As the economy uses fewer and fewer workers to produce the same amount of goods or more, we must look for new ways to meet the growing challenge of chronic unemployment." ⁽²⁾

I think it takes the greatest courage for a politician to point to a problem ahead of society's general recognition of it. Since injurious automation is not a partisan issue per se, but a society-wide dilemma, I am glad to hear every politician speak up about it. Here is premier Glen Clark of my own province, British Columbia, taking the banks to task for the automation steps they plan to take:

"[The banks] have steadily downsized, laying off staff left, right, and centre. ... If we don't start seeing some serious reductions in unemployment, then [the banks who are creating virtual banking sites on the Web] better plan for virtual deposits in their virtual accounts because unemployed workers don't need banks. ... It seems to me that corporations have to start dealing with this issue beyond their own bottom line." ⁽³⁾

I could not agree with the premier more. Any government in power today will face falling revenues and chronic unemployment. For any government to promise a return to good times for the community as a whole would, I think, be rash and delusive. Until the society-wide dilemma of finding work for displaced labor is solved, I think we are in for difficult times. Which government is in power will determine whether people will be helped or not through social programs, but it will

not affect the larger picture except if that government uses its good offices to issue a call to address the situation on a global scale. I think that the proper task of government in the matter.

In what I came to think of as the years since Parksville, the problem of automation did not go away. In fact it accelerated and continues to do so. Part of the problem is that we cannot solve the dilemma of automation from within the box of the thinking that brought it forth. In that box, automation is inevitable and there is nothing we can do to stop it. In that box, automation is an outworking of an invisible law, Adam Smith's "invisible hand." We must step outside the box to solve the puzzle of automation. It is neither the result of an outworking of an invisible law nor is it inevitable. Life was never meant to see human beings and other living species marginalized as we have marginalized them. It was never intended to be a struggle for survival, nasty, brutish, and short. Life has higher purposes for living beings.

I believe in a Creator, which we know as God. God made this world, not for machines, but for living beings -- people and the other species who live on this Earth. This world was made so that we could grow up to a knowledge of our divine Origin through the learning that comes with rubbing shoulders with one another. We cannot avoid doing some work to see to our needs and the work we do brings us together. We need shelter and so we work to build our houses. We have to eat and so we work to grow and prepare our food. Work is part of the scheme of things. We earn our living by giving an honest day's work for an honest day's wages. Through that arrangement, some plant, some tend, some reap, but all get paid. If we remove work from the social equation, people will quickly become desperate for a way to subsist. If they cannot find new work, as many cannot in today's automated setting, then they may tumble down the steps to the basement. An increasing number of people are unable to recover from automation. They are too young or too old (old now being over 40). If joblessness lingers and unemployment benefits run out, they adjust in downward steps by living simply, using up their savings, selling their possessions, accepting under-the-table payments, joining the barter economy, scavenging, begging, and finally, if they cannot subsist in any other way, turning to crime.

We see all around us people sinking lower and lower on the economic scale, people getting less, expecting less, and caring less. We see around us a vast increase in property crime -- breakins, auto thefts, car windows smashed and the contents taken, purse snatchings, petty crime of all sorts, more of it daily designed not for a high-flying life of crime, but to help a person live. I believe that the inappropriate

use of technology is the leading cause of this untold human misery. If you disagree, I invite you to educate us all by proving me wrong.

We have always considered ourselves to be civilized. We have always cared about the impact of our actions on our children. Now that we have seen that automation has downstream impacts, consider the group that is perennially downstream in the work world -- the new entrants. Hear how life is for them in a world where work is scarce and poorly paid.

"There's a general sense of hopelessness," [Communications, Energy and Paperworkers organizer Glen MacInnes] says. "[The young people] feel there are no alternatives out there. They've accepted that ... they're going to have to work harder for less." ⁽⁴⁾

"Where else are you going to go?" [Lori Banong] said. "You're just going to get a job, instead of at Starbucks, at Burger King, doing the same thing, slinging hamburgers instead of coffee. It's the same job. It's not going to get any better by working somewhere else. You're going to have to wear a stupid uniform, get paid less and start all over again." ⁽⁵⁾

Isabel Houde ... is a 30-year-old University of B.C. graduate who, after spending about \$70,000 to get a master's degree in forest and wildlife management, has been unable to find any full-time job -- let alone one in her industry.

"I carried some vendor's ice down the steps at Wreck Beach for \$20 a load." She's cleaned friends' homes and even called "ex-lovers and boyfriends" to see if they knew of any job openings.

Houde just recently found two temporary part-time jobs to help make ends meet, cleaning animal cages at a veterinary clinic for \$10 an hour and doing some clerical work. ⁽⁶⁾

What has technology done for them? Houde, in the days before work died, would have been a forest and wildlife management officer with one of the governments (hence she is unemployed). Yesterday she could only cadge a lifting job (she was underemployed). Today she works on more than one low-end job (she is overemployed and underpaid). I worked with a woman once who had three jobs. She worked two complete shifts seven days a week, except Saturday night, which

was the equivalent of her weekend. She was just holding it together and her conversational theme at work was always the same: escape.

These are just snapshots from the family album of our new technological order. It is time to acknowledge that we have made a mistake. It is time to acknowledge that technology has appropriate and inappropriate uses and applications. It is time to see that automation often has invisible social costs downstream, costs like deskilling, downskilling, technological displacement, the demise of work for millions, attendant shrinking of the social safety net, and a loss in the quality of lifestyle of the entire school-using, hospital-using, social-service-using public. When it throws large numbers of people out of work, automation hurts us all.

We have to develop a set of guidelines that will help us rein technology in. Here is my suggestion to stimulate a general discussion on this pressing subject. First, I recommend that the downstream impacts of automation be accounted for prior to their introduction and that any parties injured as a result of being automated be adequately compensated. Compensation is what we live on: it puts a roof over our head and bread on the table. Therefore, if we remove a person's livelihood without adequate remedy, then let us compensate the victim of injurious automation for the work and income that are lost.

I would be prepared to take more serious steps, like bringing global automators to court, if they refused to address the social misery they cause. I would also be prepared to boycott a global corporation's products if that firm was flagrantly harming its workers. Eventually automators will have to leave some work for humans or be taxed to redistribute their immoral profit. Here is a recommended policy on automation.

Automation Policy

1. We recognize that in many circumstances automation enhances the quality of life and that in other circumstances it diminishes it. We wish to reduce the negative impacts of automation on society while preserving the positive. We also recognize that negative impacts are due often to factors characteristic of automation itself and often to factors associated with the method by which it is introduced or applied.

2. Before automation shall occur in a firm above [to be determined] number of employees, we agree that the social impact of its introduction shall be assessed.

a. To address the social impact of automation, each business planning a new extension of automation that will lead to collapsed task boundaries or employee discharge shall conduct an impact study.

b. Each business shall see that affected employees are known and consulted and that adequate steps are taken to determine and address identified direct and indirect, primary and secondary impacts.

c. In schemes to assess compensation, the relative numbers of unemployed in the area and the chances of finding work locally shall also be taken into consideration.

3. We will not sanction automation before employee and company confirm that the measures needed to address the identified adverse impacts have been legally agreed to.

I recommend that the public act on several fronts to resolve the automation problem.

Pro-Labor Social Program

1. Exert legal pressure.

Companies that automate their workforce without making adequate compensatory arrangements should be sued. As a cost-cutting measure, the use of class-action suits should be investigated.

2. Exert consumer pressure.

A global consumer boycott should be called against the very worst offenders among the new technological order. A statement should be made well beforehand and adequate chance given to avoid the boycott. The measures that should be taken to avert the boycott should be spelled out and the means of determining compliance should be identified. If the company does

nothing to address the situation, then the global public should be asked to cease buying that firm's products. In order to reduce the company's hardship, it may be advisable to hold one-day boycotts, a week apart at first, moving to two-day boycotts, etc. To minimize loss of sales to the firm, this action should be stopped as soon as compliance is agreed to.

3. Exert electoral pressure.

No government should be re-elected which does not have a platform of measures to deal with automation's harmful effects, whether direct or indirect, primary or secondary. Citizens groups should formulate clear criteria of what is expected in a platform and furnish acceptable planks or wording if requested. Governments should enact legislation requiring firms to carry out impact assessments prior to automation of a process. Governments should provide a mechanism for their review and approval.

I would encourage the electorate through its broadest coalitions to require that the next government, be it local, state/provincial, or federal, be required to lay out a program that will halt the erosion of the social safety net until an assessment of the needs of the unemployed is taken. Services which save people from destitution should be immediately restored. Ensuring good quality medical, educational and other community-wide programs should be required of government.

The income for the maintenance of these services shall be derived from an automation tax upon companies who used automated machinery. The tax would be calculated in the following way. A company's net profit would be divided by the number of its employees. Companies whose automation quotient is high will pay a corresponding automation tax. Companies employing a large number of people, whose automation quotient is in a lower bracket, will pay a lower automation tax or none at all.

Example: Company A with 100 employees, earning \$1,000,000 profit in a tax year and using automated systems that displaced human labor, has an automation quotient of 10,000 or 10K. A company with 10,000 employees and \$50,000,000 profit, using automation, would have an automation quotient of 50K. Provision could be made for the firms with the higher automation quotient to pay an automation tax which would help replace the loss of the income-tax contributions that the discharged worker would have made.

Small businesses under a TBD size would be exempt from the tax. The proceeds from this tax would go towards the support of social services first, including schools and hospitals, and then replace lost income tax as general revenue for government. Such a scheme would have to spread around the globe to be successful.

4. Exert public pressure.

I recommend that town meetings, television and radio discussions, newsletters, e-mail, online forums, marches, "be-ins," and any other avenue be employed to get this topic before the people and begin to build consensus around the view that unwise application of automation is harming people and that we will no longer stand for it. We must change the tenor of the discussion throughout society and that will call for the same kind of dedication with which our generation fought for an end to the Vietnam War. The liberal agenda that was overwhelmed in the years between 1982 and 1986 has to be re-introduced into public discussion. That agenda had at its heart consciousness, caring, and commitment. We must reinstill these it into our efforts to bring public pressure to bear.

a. Raise public consciousness of the problem and become better aware ourselves.

Hold consciousness-raising sessions and groups, as it did the women's movement in the Sixties, to ensure that people know the direct and indirect, primary and secondary effects of automation. Look for the sources in one's own life in a lack of consciousness, caring, and commitment. Examine caring. Examine what one's commitment is and what it might be.

b. Increase our caring and compassion for those who have been hurt by automation.

Once we cared about the poor, the hungry, and the homeless. We need to find that caring in ourselves again and bring it back to the general equation. Business Darwinism is a flawed philosophy. It was never intended that we live according to its stipulations. It is in fact the antithesis of the teachings of all the world's religions. The noblest souls among us have never taught that the weakest should go to the

wall. They have always taught compassion and serving the poor. We must make business Darwinism anathema while not making those who hold it into pariahs.

c. Come together on the issue and commit.

Achieve the solidarity we once had on similar issues some twenty years ago, and commit ourselves to achieving the creation of a global standard of living -- not one founded on material goals only, but one that takes into account humanity's higher values. We know that "freedom" is far more important than a salary of a certain level. We know that "justice" is far more important than owning a car. We must create a social order that respects these human values again, above considerations of the bottom line or profit. Productivity must be valued because it results in enhanced social wellbeing, and not just for higher dollar returns per dollar invested. Somewhere, inside, everyone of us knows that man was not made for money, but money was made for man, to serve our purposes, and not for us to serve it. We know as well that nothing money can buy is as valuable as what occurs within us, and the love that occurs within us from serving our fellow man, the weakest and the strongest, eclipses the best experiences that money alone can buy.

These are my recommendations arising from considering the topic over the eight years since I left the party. In those eight years, we have gone far in automating the workplace. In the next eight years, if left unimpeded, much more work will disappear, without in most cases a satisfactory arrangement being provided for displaced workers. What will our society look like when large masses of the population are jobless and careerless, when pensions, unemployment insurance, and welfare have been pared back, when hospitals have been closed, schools are underfunded, and large numbers of citizens resort to crime to find the means to survive? "Labor-saving" will have a whole new connotation. "Cost-cutting" will be seen in a new light. Can we afford to wait until our populace turns to crime to address the problem? I hope you agree that we cannot. We owe it to ourselves and to everyone around us to say "No to unwise automation." Please join me in waking up from a decade of partying with computers and taking that stand. Automation is eating our lunch and we need to eat. Let us put aside "labor-saving" devices and see work as a joy and a privilege. If automating firms and business Darwinists will not put aside their agenda, then let us exercise our prerogatives as consumers, electorate, and public and pull the plug on injurious automation.

Footnotes

- (1) Lenny Siegel and John Markoff, *The Dark Side of the Chip: The High Cost of High Tech.* (New York, etc.: Harper and Row, 1985, 13.
- (2) Stephanie Baker Collins, national researcher, Citizens for Public Justice, "Let the job-killers bear more of UI's costs," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 Dec. 1995, A15.
- (3) B.C. Premier Glen Clark in Eric Beauchesne, "Bank Service Fees Linked to Record Profits," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 Nov. 1996, A2.
- (4) Edward Alden, "The New Face of Labor," *Vancouver Sun*, 30 Aug. 1997, C4.
- (5) Loc. cit.
- (6) Loc. cit.

Automation Issues

If This is Your Job, Watch Out! (1998)

April 29, 2019

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2019/04/29/if-this-is-your-job-watch-out-1998-2/>



The issue of automation is not new.

What is new is that we're now looking at ways of meeting the impoverishment of society that resulted - layoffs, loss of pensions, loss of benefits, minimum wage, contract employment, etc. - I see a universal basic income as the essential way of returning the benefits of automation to the whole of the people, not just a small elite.

Back in 1998 we were nowhere near considering addressing the social costs of automation, We were busy playing Tetris and loving our computers.

If This is Your Job, Watch Out!

Steve Beckow, Toronto Globe and Mail, June 1, 1998

Canada is not suffering from a simple recession, though we often read that it is. Mergers and their downsizing, globalization and its restructuring, free trade and the flight of factories to low-cost labour areas, the retirement of the national debt and the disappearance of government deep pockets -- all these are part of the picture, but the most important factor is left out. Without appreciating that factor, nothing we do to address the situation will work.

That factor is the permanent downsizing of the labour force through the capture of work by "labour-saving" technology. Sales force automation, syndicated selling, laboratory automation, warehouse management systems, automated booking, automated tellers, e-tickets, online banking, automated underwriting, automated front desk clerks -- all these "systems" have no other purpose than to reduce manpower.

As Canadian Datasystems once wrote: "What is a computer for, if not to save labor?" "Saving labor" means eliminating wages, holiday pay, pension plans, security, careers, a future. It may also mean eliminating our ability to exist as a cohesive society.

Technology is a paradox. It helps as well as it hurts. Technology has greatly benefitted us in many ways, but it's a two-edged sword. We all know its ability to enhance our pleasure, add to our productivity, and increase our profit. But we choose to remain unconscious to the magnitude of its ability to capture work. When it is applied across the board to take work away from large numbers of Canadians, we create a major, national problem for ourselves -- not quite an extinction level event, but definitely deep impact.

Since the Second World War, unemployment has steadily risen, averaging 4.2 per cent in the 1950s, 5.1 in the 1960s, 6.7 in the 1970s, and 9.3 in the 1980s. In the 1990s, it has hit peaks of 11 per cent. For youth, unemployment stubbornly stands at more than double that figure. We are learning to tolerate higher and higher levels of unemployment. We shall be required to tolerate levels soon that we would now consider difficult to contemplate.

Why is this? Because up till now, technology has been capturing jobs, but now it is beginning to capture whole occupations. Corporate travel agents, medical lab technicians, printing trades, and warehousemen are examples of whole occupations that are threatened by "end-to-end solutions" and "automated workflows."

When "recession" does hit, it masks the shedding of the worker. But when recession lifts and workers don't return to jobs, the trend is starkly revealed. If we truly wish to find the explanation for a "jobless recovery," we need go no further than business plans like this:

"Sam Pierson, president of AGA-PGT Inc. wanted to expand capacity without adding employees. But he realized that, with conventional hydraulic injection molding, he could not reach his goal of a 'lights-out' [i.e., workerless] molding plant. ... But the firm achieved near lights-out conditions at its Vernon, Conn., molding plant by using new computer numerically controlled servo-driven electric injection presses, plus impressive automated material and parts-handling systems." (Plastic News, Sept. 1997.)

Is this not a thumbnail sketch of manufacturing and service automation's impact?

Unions have been weakened by the reduced need for labour and so can't represent the workers' interests as well as they once did. Governments find revenues falling as Canadians' incomes drop. They in turn are rationing funds to hospitals, schools, and social services, which are also rapidly shrinking their services. Bankrupt of ideas, governments follow a business model, cutting costs by shedding workers themselves.

These conditions will persist through good times and bad. They are not cyclical; they are structural. If we continue following the path we are on, we shall create a gulf between the employed and the technologically displaced that will lead to a permanent, growing, and impoverished underclass.

Please do not be fooled by the conventional wisdom that manufacturing jobs are being eliminated but service jobs are opening up or that computers create one new job for every one they close down (they do not). Automation is eliminating service occupations faster than it did manufacturing jobs. Why is this? Because service tasks are simpler, more repetitive, and thus more easily automated.

Unless corporations are stopped by an aroused and united public voice, anything that can be automated will. Watch for any occupation that earns its keep in the following ways to disappear in the near future (please hear me clearly: I said "occupation," and not "job"): (1) storing, filing, and retrieving; (2) monitoring, analyzing, accounting, and reporting; (3) doing middleman work (booking, selling, ticketing, dispensing, shipping, receiving); (3) making transfers of money, mail, stocks, or information; and (4) making decisions or issuing policies whose choices the consumer can just as well indicate to a machine.

The list will get bigger as "systems" get better at doing our work. No occupation, not even computer programmer, is immune. If any of these job descriptions fits you, watch out!

Consider this as well. Automation leads to centralization and centralization knows no boundaries. Just as corporations centralize, so do economies. Peter Drucker recently suggested what this should mean to Canadians. He pointed out that the U.S. is now the only country with sizable service exports. Soon the United States will be the hub of all automated, online, remunerated services. In the same way that companies squeezed out workers, so U.S. services will squeeze out "hinterland" economies.

Already our unemployment rate is typically twice that of the U.S. Expect the difference between the two rates to rise. Unless the trend towards automation is stopped, the only significant employment pool left may one day be in the United States. Just as the Canadian worker has been displaced from work, so may the Canadian economy.

Let me remind you of what Business Horizons magazine said in 1993: "We are moving rapidly toward a 'post-service' society in which most routine and repetitive service jobs are significantly reduced or eliminated. ... What appears to be happening is no less momentous than the end of industrial society as we know it and the dizzying arrival of a new type of society with a far different economic base. ... We are witnessing what may be the permanent downsizing of the human work force."

We are seeing our standard of living decline, our country getting poorer rather than getting ahead. None of us would have wished this upon ourselves had we known then what we know now. It was an unforeseen consequence of unwise decisions.

Automation is not a bug; it is a virus that will spread throughout our population, claiming people's jobs and eventually taking the corporations down with it. StatsCan reports that consumers are getting poorer and financing their consumption out of debt now rather than income. Because robots and "systems" do not buy goods and services, they may some day be producing them without buyers. Then corporations themselves will begin to fall. When corporations start clamouring with the rest of us, what then?

When that point comes, it will be no easy matter to put our people back to work. They will be technologically obsolescent, the frontier of productive knowledge having passed them by. The solution to the structural unemployment problem will not be as easy as a simple infusion of government cash.

If we undermine work, we undermine the entire basis of our peaceful existence together. It may be fine for other countries to raise coca and deal drugs on international markets, beg by the roadside, topple governments, loot and burn, or remain docile while living in poverty and fear. But Canadians don't live life these ways.

We have tacitly agreed among ourselves to earn our keep by working. An honest day's wages for an honest day's work, full employment these have been our social contract. Take work away from us and it isn't clear how we will earn our living. This is really the new frontier, the uncharted territory that the mixed blessing of technology has led us to.

Expect government revenues to continue shrinking. And, yes, expect the demands on government for relief (retraining, placement, medical services, unemployment insurance, welfare), to continue to grow. Governments will be left to handle their paradoxical finances until they find ways to raise revenue by either taxing those in whom wealth is concentrated or else putting people back to work.

The paradox that governments face is that the governed will demand more services even as governments' revenues are falling. Such is the result of putting one's population out of work. Robots do not pay taxes. But the people they replace still pay taxes and still require social services, even as they are less able to pay for them. After all, life will go on for the unemployed.

A trend is not a law. We shall permanently downsize the work force only if we allow it. If we stand firm in demanding that public policy not permit the permanent downsizing of the Canadian workforce, then we shall in time collectively find a way to reverse this trend. I urge Canadians to begin widely discussing this global problem.

I also urge Canadians to elect a government next time that can see clearly and has the courage to wrestle with this problem. If the government feels its hands are tied because it cannot contemplate taking a leading role that involves increased

expenditure, then please, accept our thanks and step aside. If jobs are to be saved, then the next phase of things will involve a tighter rein on business practices and the expansion of government's role in the whole arena of work. I recommend that the voters of Canada in the next election insist that their party have a full platform addressing the technological capture of work and its impact on the people.

I also invite the media to leave aside discussion of "recessions" for the time being and cover the impact of technology on work. If we don't zero in on this phenomenon, we shall face a situation eventually that is worse than the Great Depression and harder to get out of.



Sidebar: Automation in the Printing Industry

"Automating workflow has been one of the primary benefits of electronic prepress systems since their introduction. However, much of the prepress automation has been done piecemeal, producing islands of automation, each with its own type of workflow. In the early stage of automating the prepress crafts, the new digital workflows tended to mimic the steps followed by the craftsmen. Automation of estimating cost and price, prepress operations, printing, postpress finishing, shipping, and billing occurred more or less independently--digital files from one stage were seldom passed on to the other stages.

"There has been a growing impetus to develop a single, all-digital workflow throughout the prepress, printing, and postprinting stages. An industry consortium called CIP3 (which stands for International Co-operation for Integration of

Prepress, Press, and Postpress) is developing standards for the transfer of digital data from one stage to another.

"How close are we to automating the digital workflow for print production? The technology now is at the bleeding edge. ... Ten years from now, the automation will be taken for granted." ("Anticipating the All-Digital Workflow," Electronic Publishing, March 1998.)

Injurious Automation (1998)

April 12, 2018

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2018/04/12/injurious-automation-1998/>



Lights-out factories, e-tickets, voice mail, automated banking machines, automated tellers, automated warehouses, computer-aided drafting, computer-assisted manufacturing, material-resources planning, management information systems, geographical information systems, robots on the assembly line have all eaten up work formerly done by human beings. And robots and automated processes don't pay taxes. (S. Beckow, 1998)

Michael asked me to write about "the old paradigms," to provide us with some markers to see where we came from. And not go there again, I imagine, after the Reval. (1)

In the encounter to have the old paradigms lift that so many of us feel called to engage in, shining the light in dark corners is the way we engage. We do it impartially but with determination, pouring out love with awareness to those hurting souls who are hurting others, but insisting they stop.

Well, what follows is a curiosity, really. I was hunting through my files for a 1998 *Dictionary of Automation*, to begin reconstructing the "old paradigm" of business

Darwinism, the notion that others are out to eat our lunch and we have to get them before they get us.

And I found this interesting article of mine. It's a piece from a longer narrative in which I look at the impact of "injurious automation." I got really mad in it. No one was listening to me. (Vasana.)

It was written in 1998. I took the occasion to revise it. It was written at the height of the automation of work.

Tomorrow I'll look at ways to offset the impact of this second industrial revolution.

Injurious Automation

In the case of automation, to automate is legal and in some cases -- where the policy doesn't harm a person -- it's helpful.

If I automate my writing and move from ballpoint to computer, I've enhanced my writing skills. I can write more quickly. I can edit onscreen. I can print out as many, good quality copies as I wish to. In all ways, the reach of my faculties has been increased, enhanced, made more effective. I'm all for it.

But when automation is extended to society at large - as in the automation of a profession - not everyone's performance is enhanced and made more effective. Some are de-skilled and rendered obsolete (we call it "bridged"), released back into a non-existent job market with no provision made for them. Some are out of jobs; some are out of professions; some are out of careers.

Releasing hundreds of thousands of people onto the job market at one time in a jobless recovery is not helpful.

Injurious automation is the infliction of harm on vast numbers of people. Lights-out factories, e-tickets, voice mail, automated banking machines, automated tellers, automated warehouses, computer-aided drafting, computer-assisted manufacturing, material-resources planning, management information systems, geographical information systems, robots on the assembly line have all eaten up work formerly done by human beings. And robots and automated processes don't pay taxes.

Add them all together and we have the elimination of work, without compassion or compensation, for large numbers of people around the globe - your friends, your neighbors, your family. A small group of people benefit from this and most of society pays for it. And no one is saying anything about it.

Our use of automated tools to "get ahead" has been unwise and ineffective. Moreover, we seem locked into continually, repeatedly, predictably using them in the same ways.

I read an article on a medical lab website last night, which my wife brought to my attention. It pleads the same necessity to go further that so many automaters do. It would have its "islands of automation" linked in the lab, fully automating it and releasing from work the last lab technicians who have not already been displaced. This would take the work of the lab further. Its abilities, lower costs (no jobs), etc.

In medical labs, lab technicians will become dodos. The job category would be emptied out as if it were a salt shaker. All the human beings who trained to be lab technicians would be ejected from work, with not a thought given to their futures. A whole category would have been eliminated from the job board and literally thrown out onto the street. This is the injurious use of automation.

And it's exactly in our applying automation in these ways -- where someone is injured by its application -- where we err and enter the realm of "unwisdom," in my view. It's unwise to hurt another -- I know in my personal life that all the hurts that I've caused are present and haunt me. It would be unwise to continue hurting once we're aware of it and its impact.

We're hurting others through injurious automation today and I'd like us to become aware of it and to stop. When we rob others of their means of livelihood and don't take care of them afterwards, we've injured them. And we're injuring large numbers.

The tools we use to work our injury or to benefit from them are the same. Automation can be our friend - it was supposed to be - or it can be our enemy. So far, it's been used against us, as if it were our enemy. We haven't shared in the rewards of automation and we've borne the costs.

When we don't acknowledge the error of using automation to our detriment, knowing it, we're complicit. It's our complicity in injurious automation that represents our missed mark as a society.

We miss the mark when we continue inflicting injury past the point of knowing that we're harming people. Injurious automation harms people. Now we know. And we can see its impact all around us.

It's time to stop.

Footnotes

(1) Here's that exchange:

Steve Beckow: But I'm not fighting a war [like Winston Churchill].

AAM: Aren't you?

Steve: Am I? What ? Against ignorance or third dimensionality?

AAM: Yes, against the old paradigms. (Archangel Michael in a personal reading with Steve Beckow through Linda Dillon, July 1, 2016.)

New Approach Needed to Address Injurious Automation

April 13, 2018

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2018/04/13/new-approach-needed-to-address-injurious-automation/>



Credit: Mother Jones

I first became aware of the fact that the urban landscape had changed in 1991, when my wife and I were taking a drive up Vancouver Island and stopped in a small town that we enjoyed having lunch at.

The Mom and Pop restaurant that we used to patronize was gone. And as I looked around the street, I saw that all other Mom and Pop establishments had also disappeared.

In their place were the McDonald's, Subways, A&W's, and in the background, the Costco's, Walmart's, and other box stores that we all know as practically the staple of every community landscape today. What had changed?

What united them all was that they were franchises and what made franchises possible was computers.

My society had become computerized and automated.

When I was a young child, the current meme was that machines would make our lives easier. Automation would take drudgery away from us and leave us to enjoy life. But that's not what happened.

What happened is that millions and millions of people were thrown out of work. They lost not only their jobs, but their careers and professions as well, to the machine. They were often reduced to working in MacFlipper jobs. They were redundant and obsolete.

Meanwhile prices continued to rise much faster and farther than wages for those who continued working.

After my 1991 awakening, I began to research automation. I published articles warning others of the harmfulness of thoughtless, injurious automation. (1) But no one would listen - not my provincial premier, not the provincial labour federation head, nor anyone I could find.

People seemed fascinated with a machine that could help us do more, remember more, and enjoy more. At 4:00 in my office, everyone stopped working and began to play Tetris. No one wanted to hear about computerization's perils.

In the years since then, millions of people have not only been put out of work by automation; they've lost professions and careers without any alternatives appearing. Work has shrunk for many people and they simply stare poverty in the face.

Our children especially paid the price. They have no secure/regular jobs, only consultancies and temporary employment. They have no pensions, medical plans, dental plans, etc. No prospects and no secure future. Automation plus offshore outsourcing have caused this and it happened on our watch.

No one gave any time to figuring out how a population so displaced would be able to afford any kind of lifestyle. And there was little thought given to compensating those workers who were now redundant, obsolete, no longer needed. No one

offered to pay for their re-education. They were simply shed and left to adjust to the loss of their jobs and careers.

Now we see articles with headlines like "We need a New Deal to address the economic risks of automation" and "Crash: how computers are setting us up for disaster."

But it's too late to shut the barn door. The horses have left.

I now believe that an entirely new approach is needed.

The approach is not simply to create new jobs, although some new jobs will be needed in the future. We'll need new jobs to clean up the planetary pollution, bring in new medical technologies, end hunger on the planet, end homelessness, stop wars, etc.

But, if we're to see that millions of people don't continue to suffer after having already fallen through the cracks, we need something on top of that.

The approach I recommend is to free as many people as possible from the need to work by getting behind national schemes of universal basic income (UBI).

What we need to do is place purchasing power in the hands of the population at large again.

I ask all financial wayshowers and currency holders to consider, on their own or banding together, to support a UBI for your country.

If work is in fact being taken care of by machines, then let the population be freed in actuality and not simply in theory.

I'll be funding a UBI for Canada (2) and helping as many others to do the same in their country as my resources will allow. (3)

Join me in putting purchasing power into the hands of all people on this planet. Yes, NESARA will do that and if NESARA beats us to the punch, well and good.

But things that have been said to be near to happening have taken years to happen. I won't wait. Join me in seeing that all people on this planet have a Universal Basic Income. (4)

Footnotes

(1) Two of them have been reprinted here: "If This is Your Job, Watch Out! (1998)," August 10, 2011, at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/2011/08/10/if-this-is-your-job-watch-out-1998/> and "The Principles of Largescale Employment Projects – Part 1/2 (1995)," February 23, 2016, at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/2018/01/02/the-principles-of-largescale-employment-projects-part-1-2/> and "The Principles of Largescale Employment Projects – Part 2/2 (1995)," February 23, 2016, at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/2016/02/23/the-principles-of-largescale-employment-projects-part-22/>.

(2) Archangel Michael has asked me to see to Iceland second.

When I pointed out to him that Icelanders had received the equivalent of \$60,000 apiece already, he maintained his desire to see them receive a UBI next.

He said: "Think of it this way. It is a reward for good behavior." (Archangel Michael in a personal reading with Steve Beckow through Linda Dillon, Dec. 20, 2017.)

(3) And consistent with my intentions to fund a Gender Equality Project and other projects.

(4) From now until the Reval, that simply means creating the intention to fund a UBI. After the Reval, we can all plan together how we'll accomplish such a program.

Youth Face a Lack of Opportunities

Feb. 22, 2023

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2023/02/22/342759/>



Teenage university student looking for work

I have a young friend who's like a granddaughter to me and through her I've been able to meet many 25-36-year-olds.

Their situation is very sad. They're entirely willing. And they have ideas. But they're the kind of ideas that reflect their situation.

Their situation is a lack of opportunities. Automation took most work away from them. The Baby Boomers were the first generation whose parents wanted them sent to university and could afford it. Now the cost is too high and work to earn the money is scarce.

Our young men and women today may be the first generation to face enforced idleness since the Great Depression.

G/NESARA (Global/National Economic Security and Reformation Act) will change all this and it couldn't come too soon. (1)

Until then, how will our children live? They haven't had the educational opportunities available to us. Some of the youth I've met don't like reading. They'd rather have it spoken to them in films, videos, podcasts, etc.



Their discussions show little awareness of large corporate organizations and how they work, little awareness even of a team/work situation.

There are no entry-level jobs for them to learn how a team works anyways and if there were they'd be entry-level jobs to nowhere. Firms have few vertical dimensions to speak of any more. There's no room for advancement. And no financial incentives.

They can get mostly low-paying jobs or contract work. No security. No future. And, curiously, no one to argue on their behalf.

I imagine that the youth of today don't even know what hit them. They probably think this situation is just the way it is.

One of the very first projects I'm going to start after the Reval and before NESARA is the Vancouver Project. That will be taking one specific area and building a dream city out of it.

One of the first parts of the dream I'll put in place is an employment program for youth. At the heart of the program is a degree-by-apprenticeship element. A youthful landscape enthusiast would get a degree in landscaping through on-the-job training, for instance.

That would greatly speed up the educational process, especially if you consider that we're talking about people who have not enjoyed the access we had.

Since they live in speech (I grew up living in text), I imagine our businesses will have to change to allow them expression through work.



Michael said you can't fix a problem by simply throwing money at it. Although I'll make youth a priority, I don't plan to rush things. Perhaps we'll provide an interim relief program and then enpanel a group of youth representatives to design a program to give their brothers and sisters the means to live out their dreams. While they're still young.

I'm surprised that the youth I've met have remained so "decent" in the face of the very raw deal they've gotten from a society that automated their future out of existence.

Automation – We Did It

September 13, 2023

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2023/09/13/automation-we-did-it/>



Credit: agatel.uk.co

I wish you could have been with me, reading the trade journals in the '90s on automation.

I've told the story before of the realization I had one day that automation was eroding the job market. (1)

I still have a few boxes of magazines in a storage space somewhere. I offered them to several archives and no one has proven interested. Too bad. This is an unbeatable record of the automation of the North American labor force. I'll hold on to them until their value is realized.

For those who managed to stay ahead of the wave of automation, it was feast; for others, it was famine.

But we had the social safety net - the range of services that had sprung up in the socially-committed Sixties. But then, in the buyer's market for labour that resulted, one by one the services shut down.

And one by one the other features of the world we had built and known since WW2 disappeared. The paradise, the American dream, the democratic way of life that we were creating succumbed, to be replaced by a popular culture founded on sensory pleasure and individualism.

We even know that the music industry forced the acceptance of rap music because they knew it would incite violence and thereby increase the prison population. They'd invested in prisons for profit. (2)

But we never recognized the wholesale erosion of our culture because our culture was offering us so many distractions - computers, movies and TV that pushed every boundary, diversions, excitements.

Not for those automated out of a job or career. Reported the business magazines:

"Some critics ... call it deconstruction rather than reconstruction -- jobs are a casualty at every point in the delivery chain. ...

"[International trade consultant Patrick] Couling says the cost-cutting electronic revolution is one reason why economic recovery in the U.S. has yielded 3.5 million fewer jobs than past recoveries. Employers are investing in systems, not workers.

"The fallout can be devastating. But it is more of a disaster to do nothing. It is a case of damned if you do and damned if you don't,' he says." (3)

"What is a computer for, if not to save labor?" (4)

"Most of the jobs lost are lost forever." (5)

One Canadian financial writer estimated that automation needed to save around \$10,000 in labor costs to be worth it.

"Theoretically every time you make a \$10,000 investment on technology you should have replaced one employee." (6)

That \$10,000 was somebody's wages and no jobs awaited the unemployed.

They're describing what became known as a "jobless recovery," the first I'd ever heard of. Said one writer:

"People are coming to terms with the fact that you can have a jobless recovery. This is something that's really a recent phenomenon." (7)

As two consultants explained:

"Revolutions are always bloody, and the productivity revolution is no exception. As companies large and small embrace new technologies and eliminate jobs, millions of workers are finding that their old careers are becoming obsolete. " (8)

The business writers plainly saw the writing on the wall. But we continued to automate without seeing to the welfare of the displaced.

We did it. Our generation watched without concern as the labor market shrank. We were fascinated with our Tetris and the shortcuts we could write into our blue-screen computers. And the bulletin boards!

Hughes Aircraft broke at 4 PM every day (5 PM was closing time) as everyone fired up their favorite computer game or read the bulletin boards. No one talked about it. Everyone did it.

No one wanted to hear about automation. Not the premier of my province of British Columbia, whom I admired and on whose student council I'd sat years earlier. Not the head of the BC Federation of Labour. No one wanted to hear.

And now here we are. I saw an article the other day saying fewer and fewer people of working age are working. (9) Well, yes, what did you expect? Why do you act so dumbfounded? It's called "structural unemployment," I believe.

It's so blazingly simple: We automated our jobs and in many cases careers out of existence without any plan to take care of those affected. We automated without any thought to our children's futures. We were simply motivated by greed for profit and damn those who couldn't stay aboard.

Look around you at the financial and economic landscape. If you can subtract from it the wreckage caused by the deep state as it shrinks in power and influence, the rest of the wreckage in North America was due to automation.

We forgot that robots don't pay taxes. The cost of automation was borne by the working population, employed or not. The owners of the machines reaped the profit.

The last time I looked, this chronicle of the theft of a generation's future is largely an untold story.

Enter NESARA (the National Economic Security and Reformation Act).

I bow in respect to the authors of NESARA. I know it's more than what's contained in the act (10) but what's contained in it stops the insanity, rights a few wrongs, and levels the playing field.

There's much more to go, but NESARA is a start and sets us off in a beneficial direction.

Then we can move on to right the remaining wrongs, redirect our systems, and fulfill our purpose in being here - to rejuvenate all and help the planet prepare for Ascension.

I also bow in respect to all of our children and grandchildren who paid a price by agreeing to be incarnated now. The price they paid, among other things, was the loss of an obvious and easy way to earn a livelihood (a job), with the chance of permanent employment, advancement, pension, benefits plans, etc.

The price they paid was in a loss of peace of mind and living with insecurity, depression, and worse.

I see every day what it's done to people. I see that your generation has had to live by its wits. I see that it's been hard. And I salute you.

Footnotes

(1) "In 1990 I was driving through what had once been small towns on Canada's west coast, when I suddenly became aware of something radically different.

"All the familiar Mom-and-Pop restaurants and grocery stores were now gone, replaced by the same franchise outlets that I was used to in the big city.

"The recognition came as an epiphany. I asked myself what had happened to alter the business landscape so much. The inquiry led to eight years of studying the impact of automation which, by 1990, was well underway.

"I became alarmed at what that impact on the work world seemed to be. But, though a few authors were writing on it and though I contacted labour leaders, government leaders, and anyone else of influence, no one seemed willing to listen. My own personal belief was that everyone was in love with the computer at that particular time and no one wanted to hear bad news about it." ("Introduction" to *The Impact of Automation on Work*, at <https://www.angelfire.com/space2/light11/index70.html>.)

(2) See "The Secret Meeting that Changed Rap Music and Destroyed a Generation (Repost)," September 11, 2020, at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/2020/09/11/the-secret-meeting-that-changed-rap-music-and-destroyed-a-generation-repost/>

(3) "Triple bar decks jobs. Code data cuts cost for retailer," *Vancouver Province*, Oct. 14, 1993.

(4) Jim Steinhart, "Database Octopus," *Canadian Datasystems*, May 1991, 58.

(5) James Purdie, "Upgrading is the best route to job security," *Financial Post*, Dec. 16, 1991, 11.

(6) James Miller, CEO of Royal Trustco in *Macleans Magazine*, Nov. 23, 1992, 44.

(7) Eric Beauchesne, "Canadians Seem Resigned to Fewer Jobs, Poll Finds," *Vancouver Sun*, 5 July 1996, A9.

(8) Michael J. Mandell and Christopher Farrell, "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs -- Eventually," *Business Week*, June 14, 1993, 72.

(9) Steven A. Camarota and Karen Zeigler, "Working-Age, but Not Working. A look at the decades-long decline in labor force participation among the U.S.-born and its implications for immigration policy," *Center for Immigration Studies*, August 21, 2023, at <https://cis.org/Report/WorkingAge-Not-Working>.

(10) See *What is NESARA?* at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/What-is-NESARA-R4.pdf>

Basic Third-Dimensional Illusion: Separate Selves Struggling for Survival amid Seeming Scarcity (Repost)

September 5, 2020

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2020/09/05/basic-third-dimensional-illusion-separate-selves-struggling-for-survival-amid-seeming-scarcity-repost/>



I need to set the stage for a discussion of values for a New Earth.

I need to talk about the old paradigm first. That old paradigm had three features: (1) social Darwinism, (2) empirical materialism, and (3) ethnocentrism or race supremacy.

I'll explain these schools of thought as we go.

I repost the next three article because I could not say it better if I rewrote them today.

I'd begin by reposting this article on what historians call "social Darwinism."

It's been in some ages the dominant filter through which westerners have viewed their world. It provided a "scientific" rationalization for the colonialism of the Victorian Age.

It was the language of choice during discussion of automation in the 1990s. It justifies doing nothing for the suffering. From Oct. 2013. Revised.

What is the mindset we're trying to let go of, that tells us how life is in our everyday setting? Can we state it in its simplest and most fundamental form?

Let me offer my version of it:

We are separate selves struggling for survival amid seeming scarcity.

The best label for this view of life, in my opinion, is "social Darwinism." Life is a struggle for existence, in which only the strong survive. The weakest go to the wall. This, the social Darwinists asserted, was a natural law of life.

Can we look at this short statement, as an approach to dispelling this primary 3D illusion?

(1) *We are separate selves.*

(a) We are selves. That's true. God tied a knot in the ocean of love, light, and consciousness. The balloon thus formed, full of God-consciousness, we call a self.

(b) So long as our vibrations are dense and heavy, we can only know that self as something separate from all other selves.

We don't see or feel the God-stuff. We refuse to admit that the seeming individuality we have is not fixed, permanent, or eternal. We are God but we refuse to abandon our penultimate state as God the Self, Christ, Atman, or pearl of great price.

Does anyone discuss this penultimate state? Yes, St. Paul describes the Self ultimately surrendering to the All-Self - in Biblical code - here:

"Then *cometh* the end [final enlightenment], when he shall have delivered up the kingdom [all the bodies, all the selves] to God, even the Father." (1)

This surrendering of the Self constitutes "final" enlightenment, which, in my vision of 1987, was represented by the small golden star returning to the Father and immersing itself in him. (2)

Therefore, viewed from the standpoint of ultimate Reality, the One without a second, there is only One. We must be that One; otherwise there would be a second.

Viewed from the Highest Reality, then, there never was, is or ever shall be separation between God and this apparent "me."

So the separation from God is only a seeming, an appearance, which occurs on the Third and Fourth Dimensions, the lowest and most dense we'll ever see.

Thus we see that this part of our statement - that we are separate selves - is not absolutely and fundamentally true. In the end, it's revealed as an illusion.

(2) struggling for survival

(a) Survival - do we actually need to survive? Have we ever questioned that?

I've been outside my body and see that I'm not my body. When I was outside it, I never felt hunger or questioned where I'd sleep that night. I was free of all those conditions.

Whatever happens to my body at death need not concern me for I have a life independent of it. So for me, anyways, survival is simply not an issue.

(b) Struggling - do we need to struggle to survive? Or struggle for anything?

In the time I spent in Fifth- and Seventh-Dimensional love, I found myself in a state of consciousness where any idea of struggle would have been laughable.

Laughable because I could not have struggled for anything, so deeply awash in love was I - rich, profligate, generous. I could have given it all away, knowing that the replenishing flow was endless.

No struggle there. But no struggle also because I had everything I wanted. Don't you see? Love - real love, transformative love - is what we're looking for. It is everything we've ever wanted.

I've known that state of being where real love is free and plentiful and in that state is no thought of struggle.

In that state, we're certain that we've arrived. There's nowhere else to go except deeper and deeper into Love.

Therefore, that we need to struggle to survive is another myth, another illusion. Ascension will demonstrate that.

(3) *amid seeming scarcity.*

Leaving aside the fact that any scarcity we create increasingly seems to arise out of our own beliefs in lack and limitation, there was certainly no scarcity where I ended up. I drowned in an ocean of love. No scarcity there and I wanted nothing else.

If you offered me gold while I was in that state, I'd have only smiled. I wouldn't have lifted a finger for it. What can gold give me that love does not? Gold is just a color and a belief. I laugh to compare it with love.

In that state you really get the importance to us of how we feel. Because when we feel brimful of love, we want nothing more. There really is an end to our wanting.

All I wanted was to touch the fingers of other love-soaked pilgrims as they passed me by going wherever they were in an unrushed, love-drenched world.

Consider the free gifting of replicators as a mid-term tangible indication that there's no scarcity. The replicator will give you whatever you ask of it.

Then consider that, before our journey of Ascension has ended, we'll be creating what we want by thought. No scarcity there either.

The trend is not towards scarcity but away from it. So this part of our statement too seems to be an illusion.

There isn't a part of our statement of the fundamental credo of the Third Dimension that has held up very well to scrutiny, when viewed from a higher-dimensional perspective.

And yet this point of view is so basic to our behavior patterns that we "live it," without thinking about whether anything about it is true, real, or eternal. And, it turns out, nothing about it is.

We are not separate selves struggling for survival amid scarcity.

We are Children of God, not different than or separate from the Mother/Father, learning our true identity by willingly entering an illusory world and limited existence for a time.

Our journey ends when all individuating bonds are broken (the balloon is burst) and we experience our Oneness again, picking up, I imagine, pretty much where we left off before we went out into the school of matter (*mater*, Mother).

Footnotes

(1) I Corinthians 15:24.

(2) See "The Purpose of Life is Enlightenment – Ch. 13 – Epilogue," at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/2011/08/13/the-purpose-of-life-is-enlightenment-ch-13-epilogue/>

Automation and the Social Contract

Last revised: 25 October 2006

<https://www.angelfire.com/space2/light11/autocontract1.html>



In the "developed" world, jobs are being shed with such rapidity that we may have to create them for the great mass of people in years to come.

Jobs are being lost through automation and offshore outsourcing. Automation is making millions of people around the world redundant by "bridging," by making obsolete, their jobs and sometimes their careers. It is eliminating entry-level work that previously would have allowed the young and the new immigrant to enter the job market and would have provided a vertical ladder of promotion for others to mount.

Automation is obliging many people to cobble together a series of low-paying part-time jobs or a pattern of moonlighting on top of low-paying full-time jobs, to make ends. The people who benefit from the process have used the resulting buyer's market to break unions, lower wages, end pension plans, reduce benefits, and so on. In the process, a smaller and smaller group of people amass the world's wealth and a larger and larger group of people are looking at what could be a gloomy future.

Work is also being shed because people in business have used the transnational telecommunications networks that have arisen to outsource whatever work can be sent to low-wage areas of the world. Much manufacturing, banking, call-centre, software programming, and other tasks that survived automation have also now gone, further reducing the jobs available to the citizens of the "developed" nations.

Instead of everyone being benefited, as the rosy accounts of automation and the leisure age propagated in the 1950s and 1960s would have had us believe, the means of livelihood are being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands around the world.

In the past, we lived by a social contract in which work provided the means of livelihood. Now, with work disappearing for so many people, either the state will have to fund new areas of work, with money secured from taxing corporations who benefited so much from automation and offshore outsourcing, or else the state will have to break the connection between work and the means of livelihood and ensure that everyone by right has the basic means to live.

Eventually, I can conceive of that right being extended around the world.

With the Baby Boomers approaching old age, we will have a shedding of workers that many economic pundits think will require new recruits through immigration. But I predict that the passing of the Boomers will eliminate the extra manpower made obsolescent by automation and offshore outsourcing. The resulting size of the population, for the jobs available, might have been just right. But, alas, governments are bringing in large numbers of newcomers, for whom jobs do not -- and, I predict, will not -- exist.

Just as we have seen the phenomenon of jobless recoveries in the last thirty years, as automation soaked up work, so we shall see the phenomenon of unemployed immigrants brought here to fill a space left by the Boomers with no space actually arising. Those immigrants may accuse the host society of racist unacceptance of them, when the actuality of the situation is that work has dried up.

Their unemployment will have been produced by poor planning and by the same forces of automation and offshore outsourcing that have been eliminating work for years. Immigrants are being recruited by host countries in the fear and

misperception that vacancies will arise with the passing of the Boomers, vacancies which, I predict, will not come about.

Such will be the future misery of the world. Few jobs, many accusations, social unrest, much devastation, eventual social reconstruction. Oh, how sad it is that we do not respond to events like these before the fact or during the crisis. But, alas, we as a world seldom have.

Back in 1990, when I first woke up in a moment of insight to what automation was doing, I tried to interest political and even labour leaders in some response that took into account what was happening to the work force. No one was interested. Everyone was glued to his or her "play station." The benefits of automation dazzled everyone I spoke to.

I still don't think very many people are interested. I still don't believe we will avoid the social cost of violence that we saw in Paris burning last year as unemployed immigrants began to point the finger for their suffering at what they assumed to be racist hiring policies (racism may have played a small part, but the lack of jobs was a far greater factor, I believe). That unrest will spread.

It is anyone's guess exactly how much of the world burning it will take before we see that the way we have gone about fashioning our "progress," at least in the developed countries, has created a massive problem for the world. Another problem we leave to our children.

Killing for Market Share: The Old Paradigm in Business - Part 1/2



It's eat or be eaten in business.
Credit: joannapennebickley.typepad.com

As financial wayshowers, one of our tendencies is to look to see how people did business in the past and then to borrow from them.

But we have to consider that those who went before succumbed to some pretty shallow and often corrupt business practices and have very little in the way of philosophy to bequeath to us. My own suggestion to financial wayshowers is to forget how business in the past operated and to carve out new paths, based on love, compassion and integrity.

The article that follows was written some time ago. I began to craft it anew and realized that the way I'd written it then was far clearer and more precise than the way I was recrafting it now.

What's missing here is an appreciation of the extent to which the Illuminati owned the economy and were working it for their own enrichment and the subjugation of the working and middle classes. While I suspected collusion in business, I had no idea that everything - business, politics, religion, medicine, education, the military, etc. - was permeated by Illuminati control.

I'd like to look here at the philosophy I call "Business Darwinism." Business Darwinism is the pseudo-scientific application of the principles of Charles Darwin to business.

Business theorists who followed its tenets represented business as a struggle for existence in which only the fittest survived. The business world was a jungle, red in tooth and claw, and the business that succeeded was the one that could pounce first.

"In that modern-day tribe called a corporation," said a Dow Jones ad in *Business Week*, "it's still the survival of the fittest." (1)

Firms rose and fell because "it's evolution. Successful firms will grow big, and smaller ones will shrivel and die." (2) This doctrine was held to be synonymous with economics itself, as if it were an invisible law of the universe.

Megafarms, for instance, many of them in Florida and California, favored letting the weak go under. "It sounds cruel, but that's what economics is all about," says John Zonneveld Jr., who had a 10,000-head operation in Laton, Calif. (3)

"Social Darwinism is respectable again," *Report on Business Magazine* observed in 1991. (4) The modern firm had to be ready to turn on a dime, downsize their workforce, locate overseas, and do anything else to see that no one else ate their lunch.

The sense of urgency that business leaders saw all around them in the nanosecond nineties moved some to declare that "a major shakeup is coming soon -- one in which only the strongest, best prepared companies will survive." (5) This was the decade of the major global meltdown, the first in which computer technology combined with global telecommunications to make world trade wars possible in real-time.

"If management really wants to be around in the nineties, something has to be done. We no longer are just competing with the company down the street. Today, the name of the game is global competition. Survival is what many businesses are facing." (6)

The Nineties were considered to be the first decade of true global competition and global economic warfare.

"Today's manufacturing market is a truly world-wide market where only the world class manufacturers will survive. ... To achieve the dramatic results

needed for world class competition, dramatic changes are needed in manufacturing philosophies and techniques." (7)

The business page read like the sports page. Where nations once squared off against each other, now global businesses went toe-to-toe. Sometimes America lost ground:

"While internecine strife hogged attention at home, the U.S. retreated in the far more important war of global competition. Biggest winner: Japan, where companies stay in fighting trim without having to listen for predator's footsteps." (8)

At other times America surged forward: With the rise of low-cost capital, the U.S. "scored a victory in its battle to become more competitive in the global economy." (9) The successful survivors were lean and mean. "What is GE Capital's edge?" asked *Business Week*. "Most important is a culture that successfully blends an entrepreneurial spirit with the hard-driving and intensely competitive focus of its parent." (10)

This point of view supplanted the liberal tone of discussions from the Seventies and early Eighties. Where once caring and commitment had been praised, now lip-service was paid to the would-be-masters of the universe who overpowered, dominated and controlled. (11) In the service of market share, global firms were pictured slugging it out and fighting glorious battles.

Business Darwinists often described the competitive process as a game like boxing, hardball, or football. For example:

"For much of the last decade, U.S. companies have been maligned as wimps that lacked the grit and gumption to stand up to Japanese and European rivals. As they cowered in the big shadows thrown off by the Siemenses and Matsuhitas of the world, American firms caved in to quarterly earnings pressures and skimmed on long-term technology investments. But lately, the derisive criticism has begun to ring hollow.

"Domestic corporations, perceived by many as the world's weaklings, have put on new muscle and become industrial warriors capable of blowing away even the most intimidating global competitors." (12)

Facing stiff competition from Germany and Japan, the nation was encouraged by tales of American companies muscling their rivals, aceing them, trouncing them, and leaving them quaking. (13) American firms were depicted blindsiding their opponents, blitzing them, and giving them palpitations. (14) Like IBM and Microsoft they were "fighting tooth and nail [for] market position." (15) Like U.S. Surgical, they "took the market by storm and left once-dominant [competitors] stunned." (16)

Those who toughened up were congratulated for "[getting] the jump on the competition" and "[knocking their] socks off." (17) Examples ranged from the local to the international, from companies to nations. The supermarket down the block "squares off" with its union. (18) An international computer maker "goes toe-to-toe" with its international rivals for its share of the world market. (19) The American nation enjoys enhanced prestige because of its "new economic muscle." (20)

When the business press talks about life in the global ring, it classifies companies into fast and powerful. Nissan and Toyota are powerful. Europe is fast. The Japanese carmakers are characterized as "heavyweights," facing "a leaner, meaner Europe Inc.", which is "just what's needed to fend [them] off." (21) Hewlett-Packard is powerful and also fancy. Attacked by Japanese clone-makers, HP is eulogized for "slugging back" and "packing a powerful punch." (22)

"By 1989, more than 60 Far Eastern clones were closing in on HP's market. In a lightning-fast response, the Silicon Valley company struck back with cheap and technologically advanced machines. 'We hit them with a left, then a right hook,' says Richard Watts, Hewlett Packard's director of worldwide sales and distribution for computer products. ... That fancy glove work ultimately landed pugnacious HP in the winner's corner." (23)

When firms slug it out, some "get pummeled"; others "clobbered." (24) The weak end up "showing bruises." (25) However, no matter what the situation brings, it's expected that no competitor will "give up ... without a fight." (26)

Whether fighting among themselves or against foreign competition, says *U.S. News & World Report*, "America's toughest companies [are displaying] tenacity and innovation in beating up global foes." (27) In case its drift escapes its readers, the commentators make it abundantly clear: "The moral of these stories is simple: Getting tough is the only way to thrive in today's global market." (28)

Business gets bloodier than the boxing metaphor allows. In some accounts, savvy companies are metaphorically represented as bloodthirsty predators, searching for prey. A European firm is congratulated for having "a killer instinct for competition." (29) Airbus is depicted as "aiming at Boeing's jugular." (30) General Electric is "always prowling for new businesses" to expand into. (31) When it finds one, it strikes quickly and "gobble[s] up assets from weakened rivals." (32) These companies will kill for market share.

A normally conservative company (Corning), "which had been eyeing Damon for years, jumped in with a decisive strike -- a \$401 million cash offer of its own. Done deal." (33) Counsels a broker in *Business Week*: "The people who can pounce first are going to make money." (34) Competition here is truly bloodthirsty. But the situation is praised for waking complacent corporations up. Says one CEO: "There's nothing like the survival mode to get humans moving." (35)

(To be concluded in Part 2.)

Footnotes

- (1) Dow Jones ad in *Business Week*, 23 Sept. 1991, 33.
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- (10) Tim Smart, "G.E.'s Money Machine," *Business Week*, 8 March 1993, 63.
- (11) Faltermayer, *ibid.*, 58.
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- (15) Carolyn Van Brussel, "Multimedia Battle Lines Drawn," *Computing Canada*, 21 November 1991, 6.
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- (20) Farrell, *ibid.*, 73.
- (21) Blanca Reimer, "'Quite Frankly, Being Unemployed Stinks,'" *Business Week*, 15 July 1991, 45.
- (22) Pomice and Cohen, *ibid.*, 73 and 66.
- (23) Pomice and Cohen, *ibid.*, 73.
- (24) Robert Neff, "A Year of Twists and Turns," *Business Week*, 15 July 1991, 52-3.
- (25) Todd Vogel, "Rene Anselmo Can Sure Dish it Out," *Business Week*, 27 May 1991, 103.
- (26) Vogel, *ibid.*, 104.
- (27) Pomice and Cohen, *ibid.*, 66.
- (28) Loc. cit.
- (29) Loc.cit.
- (30) Dori Jones Yang, "Will Boeing Build a Behemoth to Defend its Turf?" *Business Week*, 19 August 1991, 28.
- (31) Tim Smart, "G.E.'s Money Machine," *Business Week*, 8 March 1993, 63.
- (32) Loc. cit.
- (33) Amy Barrett, "A Wake-Up Call for the M&A Crowd," *Business Week*, 26 July 1993, 26.
- (34) Equities-technology manager Hadar Pedhazur of UBS Securities Inc., in Gary Weiss, "In the Trading Wars, This Swiss Bank is Anything but Neutral," *Business Week*, 10 June 1991, 84.
- (35) Borg-Warner's CEO James Bere in Faltermayer, *ibid.*, 61.

Killing for Market Share: The Old Paradigm in Business - Part 2/2



Credit: Wikinomics.com

(Concluded from Part 1.)

Sometimes even failing in the chase paid off. Dealmaker Samuel J. Heyman "never bagged his prey, but he pulled down about \$500 million in profits from his investments," reported *Business Week*. We would be "hard put to find a dealmaker whose instincts were so beautifully in sync with the quick-buck mentality" of the times. (6)

The business environment is dog-eat-dog, "a cutthroat marketplace," (37) in which "we'd all kill for [profitable] savings." (38) Businessmen are warned: "He who hesitates is lunch." (39)

Scenarios are replayed in which readers are warned who is eating whose lunch: "Competition from the likes of Hewlett-Packard and Co. was eating CalComp's lunch," offered *Electronic Business*. (40) A senator fumes: "While the White House is debating ideology, other countries are eating our lunch." (41) Quipped a phone

company ad: "In the 90s, let's do lunch may have a slightly different meaning." (42)

When metaphors of slugging it out or pouncing on prey did not get business's message across, the business process was compared to war. Said one "super-banker" of another: "We don't meet, we have battles." Here is *Business Week's* account of that "meeting."

"Bennett A. Brown ... the chairman of Citizens & Southern Corp. rejected a hostile takeover bid from NCNB Corp.... Even though [NCNB chairman Hugh L.] McColl [Jr.] told Brown that he had launched his missiles, the brash, acquisitive McColl backed off with uncharacteristic meekness." (43)

Explained *Business Week*: "Every day around the world, corporations do battle." (44) Among the trade warriors, "Japan is the force to beat." (45) Public attention was focused on the Japanese as "the world's most feared global competitor." (46) First American and later European corporations were reported to be "running scared. The reason: They fear an onslaught of competition, especially from the Japanese." It is left to a British union official to remind us of the fate of the weaker trade rival: "Everyone realizes only the fittest will survive." (47)

The U.S. electronics industry is "pinned down in the trenches of an economic battle, according to our troops in the R&D labs and engineering workplaces of America. And right now, the battle is going nowhere." (48) The U.S. semiconductor industry has been "driven to its knees by Japanese targeting of the industry." (49)



Credit: content.time.com

"Having softened up the U.S. semiconductor industry by sapping its profits with low-ball pricing, Japan's electronics giants are moving in for the kill. That's the alarmist view of the proposed takeover of Fairchild Semiconductor Corp. by Fujitsu Ltd." (50)

The American press watched for any sign of winning and leapt on it.

"At first glance, it would appear to be sweet revenge on the Japanese corporate titans that have been beating up on their North American and European counterparts. ... More Japanese companies fell off the [Business Week Global 1000] list than those of any other country." (51)

Domestically and internationally, said small-business author Jay Conrad Levinson, "it's a marketplace out there. In order to survive, let alone thrive and prosper, you've got to be a guerilla." For the "guerilla marketing attack," he offered "strategies, tactics, and weapons for winning big profits." (52) Levinson took Business Darwinism to its logical extremes and showed the doctrine's ultimate direction. According to him, business competitors were our enemies.

"You are surrounded. All around you are enemies vying for the same bounty. They're out to get your customers and your prospects, the good and honest people who ought to be buying what you're selling. These enemies are disguised as owners of small and medium-sized businesses.

"These enemies thrive on competition. They're out to get you and get you good. ... Your enemies mean business, your business, your profits." (53)

The businessman with the most powerful arsenal will win: "Your bank account will brim with profits in direct proportion to how your marketing arsenal brims with these weapons." (54)

Levinson supplies business with the marketing weapons to take to war: "[These] fundamentals for winning the battle for healthy, honest, and growing profits ... will serve you well on your way to the battlefield." (55)

Daily the skirmish reports and body counts roll in from feature wars, price wars, standards wars, PC wars, cola wars, and semiconductor wars. Said the executive VP of an industrial research firm: "We're seeing the industry move in such a way that these two big forces are going to be really fighting it out. ... The battle will take place on the fronts of 'audio, video, voice CD-ROM, stereo, mass storage'." (56)

The corporation was represented as being engaged in a "do-or-die marketing battle to win over increasingly sophisticated and demanding customers." (57) The fate to be avoided is "unconditionally surrendering the ... market" to the enemy (58) while the highest grace lay in emerging dominant. U.S. News & World Report observed: "Merely being competitive is not enough in today's global markets. Rather, [a firm's] long-term success will depend upon [its] domination of markets." (59)

Said Peter Cohen in *The Gospel According to the Harvard Business School*:

"Tomorrow is the future. We trained our business leaders to successfully wage its battles.

"World War III is going to be fought on the shelves of your neighborhood shopping center, and the Harvard Business School is a sneak preview of it. How its generals are prepared. The weapons and tactics they learn to use. How, fighting against each other, against humiliation and delusions of grandeur, they run each other down, yet somehow, desperately at times, seek to maintain at least the appearance of friendship. (60)

"This is an account of [the] education [of a class of 94 MBA students] to become lords over a new kind of army in a new kind of warfare, ready to take over from the military who have perfected their technology to the point where its use is guaranteed to leave nothing worth using it for. But since men will continue to be ambitious; since they will still want to be, they don't know what, except different, they will go on fighting for those things of which there aren't enough to go around -- money, love, land, praise, power and perquisites." (61)

"Epic tales are told around the campfire. Not all the participants are happy with the process.

"At the Vick School of Applied Merchandising: It was a gladiators' school we were in. Selling may be no less competitive now, but in the Vick program, strife was honored far more openly than today's climate would permit. Combat was the ideal - combat with the dealer, combat with the 'chiseling competitors,' and combat with each other. There was some talk about the 'team,' but it was highly abstract. Our success depended entirely on beating our fellow students, and while we got along when we met for occasional sales meetings the camaraderie was quite extracurricular.

"Slowly, as our sales-to-calls ratios crept up, we gained in rapacity. Somewhere along the line, by accident or skill, each of us finally manipulated a person into doing what we wanted him to do. Innocence was lost." (62)

The author also questioned the satisfaction that predatory competition brought its new entrants:

"The Harvard Business School's blind faith in competition alienates its students from one another, driving them to the destructive selfishness, the rugged individualism that, for too long, has been mistaken for a mainspring of progress." (63)

That was about as much lip service as "destructive selfishness" got but no truer words were spoken. The selfishness at the heart of Business Darwinism conditioned society for the final push that began with 9/11.

One might ask how much these metaphorical ways of speaking actually translated into business practices? Just as, upon listening to President Nixon on the Watergate tapes, our view of White House policy-making shifted, so our view of business's wisdom and maturity may also shift when we listen to the tapes presented at a trial between Bankers Trust and Procter & Gamble.

What the evidence (and other earlier examples of Bankers' shoddy practices) demonstrated was that ethics took a back seat to profiteering at the bank. In the Economist's account, the Business-Darwinist drift is plainly seen being translated into action.

“In January [1995] the bank settled a similar case with Gibson's Greetings, a card company, after internal tapes revealed the bank's employees giving the client false information about trades in 1993.

“Now BT has been shamed by further revelations about its derivatives sales practices in 1993-94, following a court ruling on October 3rd, which made public previously sealed documents and tapes relating to the P&G case. Astonishing comments by BT employees raise fresh concerns about the bank's culture at that time.

“Consider, for example, oral references by BT staff to a ‘rip-off factor’ that was attached to complex deals involving leveraged derivatives. One BT salesman describes how he would ‘lure people into that total calm and then totally f*ck them.’ Perhaps worst of all, a video shown to new employees includes a telling description by a BT instructor of how a swap works: he says that BT can ‘get in the middle and rip them [the customers] off.’” Remembering that cameras were rolling, the instructor then apologises. (64)

Anyone not harmed by events could reflect on them philosophically, as *Fortune Magazine* did, capturing the mood of the times.

“The financial civil war that swept across America in the past decade was a ripsnorting string of shoot-'em-ups like nothing ever seen on Wall Street or Main Street. Withering volleys of money shot back and forth as insurgents stormed one entrenched corporate position after another.” (65)

But the fact remains that getting tough with one's rivals, which would have been repulsive in a gangster, was made right and desirable in the predatory market environment of the 1985-95 period.

No quarter was given or expected. Getting your licks in, bagging prey, and blitzing one another were just good competitive practices.

Had these been two boxers fighting each other in the ring, perhaps matters might have stopped there. But these lean and mean contenders for the world title stripped millions from their payrolls to get into fighting trim. And they used any weapons they could find to achieve competitive advantage.

Many of those weapons were technological and meant that the employees so eliminated would never return. Thus, what was represented as being in America's

interest may have been in the interest of CEO's who, like IBM's Aker, laid off 14,000 in 1990 and had his pay doubled to \$2.2 million for (and I speculate) having "what it took to do what was needed." (66) But it was not in the interests of the wave of Americans who had to walk the plank.

An unbridled wave of global competition was initiated by following the tenets of a philosophy of predatory competition, a phenomenon which harmed workers in every country it affected. The leaders of business would have said that nothing could be done about it, that it was the market working itself out according to its own ineluctable laws.

However, there's nothing in any natural law that specifies the human community must operate this way. Their explanations, needless to say, were small comfort to the millions whose lives were, in this age of the smart machine, irreversibly impacted.

Footnotes

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- (53) Ibid., 1.
- (54) Ibid., 4.
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- (56) Tim Bajarin, Executive VP of Creative Strategies Research Internation Inc. of Santa Clara, CA in Grace Casselman, "Multimedia Looms Large in Comdex Crystal Ball," *Computing Canada*, 21 November 1991, 18.
- (57) Crawford, *ibid.*, 46.
- (58) Paul Magnusson, "The Antitrust Ball and Chain Hobbling High Tech," *Business Week*, 29 July 1991, 34.
- (59) Karmin, *ibid.*, 72.
- (60) Peter Cohen, *The Gospel According to the Harvard Business School*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, 8.
- (61) Ibid., 8.
- (62) W.F. O'Neill, ed. *Selected Educational Heresies. Some Unorthodox Views Concerning the Nature and Purposes of Contemporary Education*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1969, 47.
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- (64) "Bankers Trust: Shamed Again," *Economist*, 7 Oct. 1995, 87.
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A Train Headed for Disaster



Last revised: 25 October 2006

All indications are that we in North America, to borrow a phrase from Werner Erhard, are on a train headed for disaster. It doesn't make any difference that some people look out the left window and some look out the right. The train itself rolls on in the same direction.

The disaster is an existential crisis for the vast majority of our people. Especially in Canada where I live, since 1980, business has been automating work, eliminating any human job that a machine could do better. Gone are many jobs that involved crunching numbers, tabulating information, keeping accounts, compiling statistics, supervising work, managing inventories, directing inquiries, dispensing tickets, booking travel, printing books, etc.

As a result, work has shrunk. Many entry-level jobs have disappeared making it harder for youth to enter the job market. Many jobs that might have been done by immigrants new to our culture, whose language skills may not yet be well developed, have also been eliminated.

On top of this, any jobs that could be exported to low-cost nations, such as call centres, banking, software research and development, and manufacturing have been sent offshore. Yet now we hear economists decrying the fall in Canadian “productivity.” But few of them seem to realize how automation and offshore outsourcing, in the service of a small group of people who are amassing the world's wealth, have caused the problem.

My deepest, darkest fantasy is that journalists and economists are not prepared to openly look at and accept the fact that those who are leading the global economy may be dead-wrong and predatory in what they are doing. That is, at least insofar as the benefit of the largest number of the population is concerned. That may be a statement that many Africans would have been willing to make for a few centuries, but it is now our turn as North Americans to see its truthfulness because we are now the victims of its harmfulness.

No, I am not suggesting a conspiracy by a cabal composed of a single ethnic group (the Nazis chose the Jews to blame); the very use of such an idea serves the power elite by scapegoating, or deflecting attention from themselves onto, some poor blokes who are usually not the cause of the problem. Surely, the Second World War discredited this strategy, hopefully forever.

As far as I can see, the members of the modern power elite who are globalizing poverty come from all walks of life. People from all ethnic groups, if they can possibly join this privileged few, this "superclass," appear to be only too eager to do so. We have apotheosized greed and sensuality in our consumer society and tantalize potential new recruits with the promise of magnificent riches and all the sensory objects and pleasures they can buy.

I believe that this movement to beggar our neighbour and roll in sensuousness and pleasure is not what life was designed for. I cannot but draw our attention to the existence, in this divine order we live in, of the law of karma, which states that "what we sow, we reap." If we beggar our neighbours, we invite being beggared in the future. If we throw people out of work, we invite the same fate on ourselves. Surely this makes sense to us - at some level.

Since merging, consolidating, and spinning off ended in the 1970s (as I recall) and automation began in the 1980s, a rapacious, predatory group of capitalists has been

bent on breaking unions, lowering workers' wages, ending benefits, and in every other way destroying the supportive environment that we created for working people in the 1950s and 1960s.

The social safety net has been dismantled. Many of its programs, which would have seen to the needs of aging workers, are now gone. Workers' wages are falling as they become deskilled and marginalized through computerization. Corporations lose their vertical lines of promotion and many workers are dead-ended.

A growing pool of people are being rendered unemployed, and some unemployable, because they have been "bridged" by the computer or rendered obsolete in some other way. This deveopling situation makes it easy for employers to keep wages and benefits low. Long lineups of people spring up for each advertised position, making it a buyer's market.

Meanwhile, the cost of gasoline, cars, rent, housing, airline tickets, clothing, etc., all creep up while some workers realize years without raises and others suffer wage cuts. Our children cannot afford to buy a house. Many of them have abandoned the idea of home ownership and are happy if they accumulate a little equity in the incredibly-expensive houses that sell today.

The disaster will hit us soon because one large section of the population - the Baby Boomers – will soon be unable to work. They will head into old age without adequate pensions or benefits or safety-net programs. They will endeavour to live without the social supports that once were there.

How will they do it?

It is quite clear that new arrangements for sharing will need to arise. One friend suggested that elderly people who have houses but lack care may wish to share those houses with younger families who lack a house but can provide care. We may need to turn to barter and the use of local currencies. All manner of arrangements may need to arise to meet the coming crisis. In the words of Werner Erhard, if we want to save the train headed for disaster from arriving there, we have to stop it, get out ahead of it, and lay new track.

How long will it take us to see that our train is headed for disaster? When will we stop the inroads of a rapacious capitalism that cares not a whit for people but

wishes only to garner the world's wealth for itself, instead of creating a world that works?

Global UBI Answer to Social Impoverishment by Automation

April 30, 2019

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2019/04/30/global-ubi-answer-to-social-impoverishment-by-automation/>



Really? Credit: Ruby Shore Software

I'd like to address the issue of automation while articles on it are still fresh in memory.

The issue of the impoverishment of society through automation isn't new.

Back in 1990, when I woke up to it, (1) almost no one wanted to hear about the subject. Most people loved playing Tetris and were enamored of their computers.

Just as we are with our cellphones today.

In 1998, when I wrote an article on the subject, (2) it was like talking to an empty room.

Criticizing the computer was at least gauche, at most hopelessly Luddite.
(3)

Here we were eliminating jobs, careers, professions, dropping pensions, cutting out benefits, causing people to work more than one job, turning permanent jobs into contract employment, busting unions, eliminating management - in every way impoverishing the worker worldwide while a very few people pocketed the benefits. What was wrong with this picture?

Why were we as a society tolerating our collective impoverishment by the inroads of automation?

Because we liked what we could do with our new "personal computers" or PCs. Much as we today like what we can do with our phones.

My wife's career as a travel agent went up in smoke and seems slated to go up in smoke a second time as a hospital unit coordinator. The computer is snapping at her heels.

What answers can we arrive at that would be Fifth Dimensional? What would a Fifth-Dimensional answer even look like?

Well, it would have to be universal to pass muster in the Fifth Dimension. There's no such thing as some people benefitting in 5D and others not.

In the Fifth, the world works for everyone. It just naturally does when you're drenched in love and bliss.

Therefore, if our answers to a situation like the impoverishment of society are to be Fifth-Dimensional, they must be universal and they must be of love.

I want to cast my vote today for an answer that is universal and loving. That holistic answer is a universal basic income (UBI) for every resident of Planet Earth. Let's look at how it fits with Fifth Dimensionality.

First of all, creating an unequal structure in the distribution of wealth on the planet would not pass muster in the higher dimensions. A UBI creates an equal basic structure. People can go above it if they like.

Secondly, in 5D, everyone would have the ability to see to their own needs. There we have a power of creating through thought, which we don't have here.

A universal basic income comes closest to freeing us up in this way, as much as we can free ourselves up short of creating by thought or replicator.

Thirdly, it'll end world poverty. If it proves only a step, we'll come up with another win/win solution until we do.

We could pay for such a venture with the funds sequestered under the Executive Order blocking the property of serious human rights abusers, issued Dec. 21, 2017. (4) There are other ways we could pay for it as well - the money is there but awaits release.

If we want a world that works for everyone, where no one is poor, we have to build it plank by plank in the world of our everyday consciousness. In the Fifth Dimension, it's a given, but we're not in 5D yet.

I see a universal basic income as an essential plank, addressing the impoverishment of society through automation and returning the benefits of automation to the people.

The measure is, in my eyes, essential for this world, not just to recover from its past injuries, but to allow us to go forward together.

Footnotes

(1) "The Impact of Automation on Work" at <https://www.angelfire.com/space2/light11/index70.html>

(2) I wrestled with what to do in a society that was closed to considering the matter of social impoverishment by automation. I wrote dictionaries of automation and books I never published.

Finally I wrote a single article on the subject, "If This is Your Job, Watch Out! (1998)," April 29, 2019, at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/2019/04/29/if-this-is-your-job-watch-out-1998-2/>

At that moment I joined the Immigration and Refugee Board and could no longer write public articles or be involved in public debate. I was sequestered from public contact for the next eight years.

When I left the Board in late 2006 and looked around at what was happening in the world during the eight years I'd been in an ivory tower, I discovered that 9/11 was an inside job. That was a huge trigger and I immediately began writing with a vengeance. (Mostly on Op-Ed News, bulletin boards, discussion groups.)

One revelation followed another - the omnicidal threat of depleted uranium (which the galactics have removed), chemtrails, pandemics, vaccines. I was again collecting data, making dictionaries.

And then on Aug. 29, 2008, I met Len Satov and heard about Ascension.

(3) Opponents of industrialization; machine-wreckers.

(4) "Executive Order Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption," Dec. 21, 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-blocking-property-persons-involved-serious-human-rights-abuse-corruption/>

The Principles of Largescale Employment Projects – Part 1/2

October 30, 2018

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2018/10/30/the-principles-of-largescale-employment-projects-part-1-2/>



From 1995.

I became aware of the impact of automation on employment in 1991 and soon began to write articles on it. (1)

By 1995, when the first version of this article was written, I was looking into the principles of creating largescale employment projects.

Very soon we'll launch into the building of Nova Earth and these principles have never seemed more relevant to me.

We've been told that it's time to re-examine all our limiting beliefs, look at processes as generically and globally as possible, and borrow from what often lies in front of us to come up with radically-new solutions to creating a world that works. This article is meant to be a contribution to that outcome. In two parts, today and tomorrow.

At a time (1995) when the bottom is falling out of the economy, when we've automated people out of work and shipped whatever jobs remained overseas, I think we need to seriously look at how to put our population back to work. The following principles may clarify, and can be adapted to, the work of creating largescale employment projects.



(1) Work is a Function of Unworkability

The first principle underlying the creation of largescale employment projects is that work is a function of unworkability.

If we think about it, workability is invisible and only unworkability is visible.

Any tool or machine that works usually doesn't attract our attention. But the squeaky wheel does and it gets the grease.

My computer, as long as it works, receives little or no attention from me. However, the minute it ceases working, I swing into action, attempting to fix it myself or having it repaired or replacing it.

With the exception of preventive-maintenance programs, we usually do no other work on anything until it ceases to work; that is, until the situation becomes unworkable.

Therefore all largescale employment projects will in the first instance arise as the result of identifying a largescale instance of unworkability and then turning it into workability. There's no lack of unworkability or "problems." So there is no lack of work for our population.

Examples of largescale instances of unworkability include global famine, disease, pollution, illiteracy, homelessness, etc. Unemployment is not a function of a lack of work. It's a function of a lack of means.

[And after the Reval, and later NESARA, there will be the means.]



(2) Value is a Function of Agreement

The second principle that I'd like to point to in the creation of largescale employment projects is that a change, solution, or opportunity, I believe, has value only because we say it has.

Take for example the case of nuclear missiles. To the best of my knowledge, every intercontinental ballistic missile that I'm aware of has only either sat in a silo or been launched up into the air to fall into the ocean.

[In fact we now know that no military on this planet has been allowed to explode a nuclear bomb with hostile intention since at least the 1950s.]

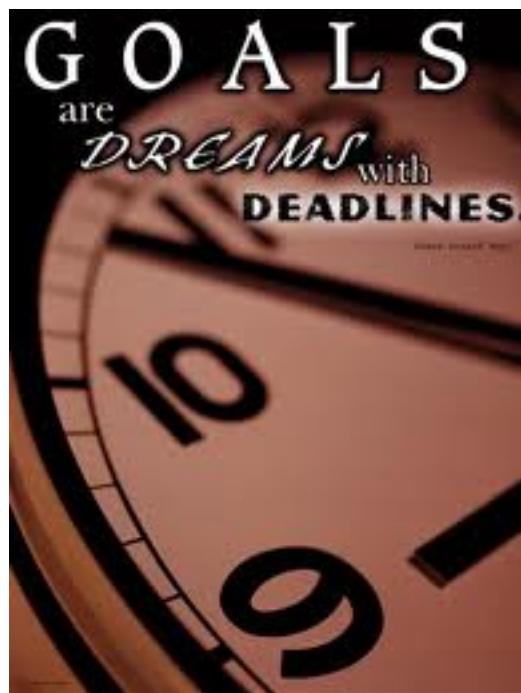
In fact ICBMs have value only because people regard them as valuable. They serve no direct useful function as, say, a car serves a function by transporting its passengers.

Some might say they serve the function of ensuring national security. I would argue to the contrary that they simply produce a condition of national insecurity. ICBMs have value only because we say they do.

Though they serve no direct useful function in the same way that a car does, they are still massively funded.

What this principle demonstrates to me is that a new solution or opportunity shouldn't be measured in terms of fictitious 'inherent' value, but in terms of the value that we attach to it. If a country deems the ending of hunger and poverty within its boundaries as valuable, money will be found to end them.

This principle gives us permission to allow ourselves to explore unheard-of or unthinkable opportunities and to focus our attention on how to create agreement around value rather than looking for non-existent inherent value. I believe that value is not inherent in a thing or event. Like beauty, value is in the eye of the beholder.



(3) Alignment Requires Deadlines

A third principle is that the social alignment needed to create a largescale employment project requires targetable, society-wide deadlines. If we want

alignment on a planetary scale, we cannot agree to accomplish our project “some day.” We must have a specific deadline to orchestrate the coordination involved.

Putting a man on the moon succeeded, all other things being equal, because President John F. Kennedy attached a deadline to it – the end of the Sixties. Had President Kennedy left the matter without a deadline, the necessary coordination of efforts might never have taken place and the goal might never have been achieved.



(4) Alignment Requires Win/Win, Global Solutions

A fourth principle in the creation of largescale employment projects is that win/lose solutions prevent alignment. Alignment is created with win/win solutions that leave no one out. Win/win solutions are global, contextual. They create no “us against them” divisions. They leave no residue.

Many society-wide solutions create as many problems as they solve. Their formulation creates new conflict. Their accomplishment transfers a burden from one shoulder to another. Their completion leaves a festering wound.\

Social programs to fight crime, help minorities, or combat disease go on within a fragmented context, with some people left out of their scope, some people winning at other people's expense, and some people, identified as the cause of the problem, being penalized or ostracized.

At the moment our global scene is riven with divisions. Blocs of nations, rich and poor, of varying religions and creeds oppose one another. Typically these days [1995], alignment is sought by justifying one's own side and blaming the other.

Righting one imbalance or injustice at the cost of creating another will not create social alignment. Only global, win/win solutions to unworkability will win the degree of alignment that ensures success.

(Concluded in Part 2, tomorrow.)

Footnotes

(1) I wrote politicians, labor leaders, anyone I could think of. No one listened. I think people were too fascinated with their computers to realize the tremendous stripping of employment and the turning of the job market into a buyer's market that was soon to happen. Here is one article from 1998, published in the Toronto Globe and Mail. "If This is Your Job, Watch Out!" at <https://goldenageofgaia.com/accountability/automation/if-this-is-your-job-watch-out-1998/>.

Equally ironic is that I collected probably the largest library of articles looking at how automation worked its way through the job market, collapsing firms, stripping entry-level jobs or any jobs that a computer could do, and ending entire careers. But when it came time to seek a library or archive for this collection, no institution was in the slightest bit interested. A phenomenon had just occurred that caused hardship to millions and ended forever the equitable workplace that we were building since the Fifties and not a person I knew or contacted had any interest in it.

The Principles of Largescale Employment Projects – Part 2/2

April 8, 2020

<https://goldenageofgaia.com/2020/04/08/the-principles-of-largescale-employment-projects-part-2-2-repost/>



Reposted from 1995.

(Continued from [Part 1.](#))

(5) The Resolution of Dissonance Creates Paradigmatic Breakthroughs

In the course of creating a largescale employment project, dissonance will arise. Disagreement may ensue. A scheme may be abandoned. But history shows numerous examples where dissonance has been the occasion, not for abandoning a scheme, but for creating a paradigmatic breakthrough.

Given the dissonance that may occur in our future, the need for mechanisms to bridge dissonance should be clear. If we're looking for paradigmatic breakthroughs, we must find new ways of addressing dissonance.

I can't think of an example of a social endeavor that illustrates this principle. In the course of my studies, I've only come across it in the resolution of personal dissonance but I'm willing to bet that the same principle can be applied to dissonance associated with largescale projects as well.

Here's an example. Max Weber created a distinction considered fundamental to the field of sociology out of resolving an ongoing family dispute.

His father, a rabbi, met Weber's sociological arguments with “unprovable” religious arguments, which Weber labelled 'values.' His own “provable” assertions he considered 'facts'. By bridging the two, and contextualizing them within sociology, he created a division between facts and values that remained a basic distinction in the sociologist's toolbox.

Another example: Benjamin Lee Whorf, before becoming an anthropologist, was a fire insurance investigator. He found that fires occurred because inaccurate linguistic labels led people to misunderstand a situation and take hazardous actions.

A worker would see an “empty” oil drum and drop a lit match into it, overlooking that it was full of flammable vapors. An office worker would throw a coat over a cone heater and turn on the “light” switch, not knowing that the switch activated the heater. When the light didn't go on, after the worker toggled it several times, he'd assume that the “light” didn't work, leaving the heater to blaze underneath his coat.

In the course of resolving these linguistic misconceptions, Whorf stumbled upon what has become known as the principle of linguistic relativity – that things are for us as we see and describe them.

Finally, Thomas Kuhn, working as a historian of science at a junior college, found the writers of outdated history texts touting their own age as the pinnacle of science, even though the age that succeeded it often discredited its science. Puzzled at how all eras could regard theirs as the height of attainment, when the science of their eras ultimately went nowhere, he arrived at the notion of temporocentrism – that people self-servingly represent their own as the best of all possible eras.

Temporocentrism comes hand-in-hand with egocentrism and anthropocentrism. Ultimately these "centrisms" came to be known and described as the self-serving bias.

I realize that these examples don't shed light on largescale enterprises, but I wish only to consider the principle that lies beneath them.

By offering solutions that bridge cognitive dissonance, instead of abandoning fruitful schemes, we create paradigmatic breakthroughs. Therefore, dissonance in our personal lives (or in our social projects) should be seen neither as a stumbling block nor as an occasion for choosing one side against the other, but as an occasion to recontextualize and bridge the dissonance.

We might therefore welcome paradox, confusion, double binds, dualisms, and the clash of opposites when they arise in the course of our social alignments and common endeavors.



(6) Critics Identify Their Own Expertise

A sixth principle in the creation of largescale employment projects encourages us to look at our critics in a productive way.

Any genuinely new activity can't be fully planned in advance. The answers to many of its problems are found in the course of accomplishing the project itself.

Critics will arise, some sincere, some not. The insincere we can pass by. But some critics are sincere and we may lose their expertise by dismissing them.\

A more constructive response would be to see them as potential contributors, speaking from their own areas of experience and sometimes identifying important actions needing to be taken.

In the example of sending people to the moon, those who say that such-and-such a material won't work probably could very well be indicating knowledge of materials that will.

This principle reminds us to turn the negative to our advantage and harness the energy of those who can foresee the problems that stand in our way.



These are just some initial thoughts on the principles of projects that might put people back to work or address areas of the world's unworkability. In the language we use today, they assist us in the building of Nova Earth.

I have in mind not some pharaoh's use of slaves to build a monument and not some manipulation of the masses to serve a reigning social class. Rather, I have in mind ennobling cooperative endeavors in which all people of the world participate for the benefit of the planet. (I have on occasion called this the vision of a "cooperative commonwealth" and, after Werner Erhard, "a world that works for everyone.")

To summarize, when we turn to addressing global famine, drought, poverty, homelessness, disease, infirmity, and inequality, the following principles may help us to frame an adequate, largescale response:

- (1) Identifying areas of the world's unworkability,
- (2) Creating projects that express and reflect our values,
- (3) Building alignment with win/win solutions,
- (4) Setting targettable, society-wide deadlines that allow for project-wide coordination of efforts,
- (5) Bridging dissonance and creating new paradigms,
- (6) And asking our critics for their expertise.

I very well may have left many things out of consideration. If you see any, I welcome your contribution. This essay was not intended to end discussion, but to begin it.