
THE TALE OF THE DISAPPEARING JOBS

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It's a twisted tale, folks! How can anyone say jobs are disappearing when reports show hundreds of thousands of new jobs created every month and middle class incomes rising? But it's all smoke and mirrors as scenarios use "alternative truths," (the newly-created euphemism for outright lies) to confuse and disguise the truth that things are not as good as they say.

One problem arises from the ever-changing definition of just what a job is. A generation ago a job usually meant 40 hours per week, overtime pay, medical benefits, retirement programs, union protection, wages and hours legislation, a personal relationship between employers and employees, and a government friendly toward labor. Today things have changed a bit, as most new jobs are part-time in the service sector, have few or no benefits, pay measly wages that have essentially stagnated since Reagan's day, and are often of a contracted nature, meaning no protection against unemployment and no benefits. Government speaks in favor of labor, but acts otherwise as it allows continuous erosion of the age-old source of working class family welfare---a good, steady job.

Labor in general explains this as a negative result of corporate off-shoring of jobs to take advantage of lower wage rates in other countries. Yes, offshoring did have something to do with job loss, especially over a generation ago, but since the 1990s a new culprit has surfaced---automation, or use of machines to replace labor.

Every new week seems to usher in a new technology designed to increase corporate profits by increasing productive efficiency. Recently it was computer-guided trucks and robotic bank tellers. Each advance is predicted to cut several million jobs. The business justification for such heavy job loss is, "Yes, but designing and building the machine will also create even more high wage jobs, and besides, it's just the free market at work." But of course they don't reveal that the jobs lost were mostly those almost anyone could be trained to do, while those added require college or more. So several million potential workers will likely discover that their skills and training are insufficient for the new positions.

What is

being steadfastly ignored by the captains of industry is that even as jobs disappear worker productivity rapidly rises. Productivity is the measure of how efficient an operation is in terms of how much value an hour of work adds to the product. With added automation and use of labor-saving robots, value added per hour of human work is vastly increased. So you might think that labor should at least share in the value added. But no, it doesn't work that way since the lion's share of the value of increased productivity goes to the owners of capital, not to laborers. So the already-rich get richer as the poor suffer from the inability or unwillingness of the holders of capital to share in the fruits of production.

What's

happening is that the 6,000 year-old Adamic curse of heavy toil is being lifted, but we in our technological world don't know how to handle what really is a great blessing. As you may remember, God cursed the earth because of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden with the far-reaching pronouncement that from now on the earth would with reluctance bring forth what humans needed. He added that this curse was for Adam's sake, since with his new-found knowledge of good and evil he would quickly fall into grievous and destructive sin without the "salvation" of hard work.

The industrialized and technologically-advanced nations of the earth need to rapidly and surely bring forth a new idea: that labor should share equitably in the purchasing power earned by their effort, even, and especially when, that productivity is supplemented by machines.

God has a way for this to happen, but of course we'll resist the wealth redistributing principles of biblical Jubilee until we have no other choice. It's for-ordained by God, so watch while the drama plays out. More later.