

Automation: The Worry And the Wonder of It

By ALPHONZO BELL
Congressman, 28th District

When cave men first began to use tools of stone and wood, the age of technological innovation began. Automation today is little more than routine progression from the hammer and the hoe. We are separated from the crude implements of our early ancestors only by time and by the refinement that comes from human energy and human curiosity.

Machines equipped with numerical controls are not new. Mechanical and procedural developments fundamental to automation have been applied in industry, government, science, and business for more than fifteen years. What is different is the pace of the transition. We are at the point of technological revolution not because of machines, but because of people.

TO THE SOCIAL changes resulting from computers and advanced electronic equipment we must look to find the real meaning of automation. Men create revolutions. Machines do not. Men react to the pressures of swirling, unsure environment. Machines are kept insulated. Our great challenge is the

maintenance of balance among human beings confronted with data which they do not understand at a speed which they cannot absorb. Computers automatically reject such information without strain. Men cannot.

Rioting against the use of machinery was common in England during the early years of the first so-called Industrial Revolution. Some two hundred years later, on Sept. 5, 1964, an Englishman, the historian Arnold Toynbee, had this to say: "One of the most disconcerting developments in Britain and other affluent countries in the loss of zest for life among young people because mechanization makes work boring."

MORE THAN tedium should concern the world as the use of automated equipment increases. Norbert Weiner, a pioneer and profound thinker in this field, commented a year ago: "Automation will produce an unemployment situation in comparison with which the depression of the 1930's will seem a joke." John Snyder, head of a company that makes automated machinery, declared on March 23, 1964: "Automation is definitely go-

ing to kill more jobs than it makes."

The Department of Labor reported that between 1956 and 1962 the number of production workers declined 8 per cent, about one million wage earners, while output rose 20 per cent. Forbes Magazine, the business publication, reported on June 1, 1963, that sixty-five of our largest insurance companies are employing 6.5 per cent fewer workers in the United States than they did a half decade ago.

NOT ALL of the speed and skill of the new machines constitute bad news for the human being. A National Library of Medicine at Bethesda, Maryland, now operates computers that digest, store and resubmit medical information in incredibly short time periods. A machine called MEDLARS (for Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System) performs arithmetic functions at the rate of six millionths of a second. Phototypesetting of this information is accomplished at 3600 words a second. A human typesetter would perform by hand under similar circumstances at forty-five words a minute. Automation will save lives. It may also destroy them.

Market Diminishes

General Auto Repair Shops at Crossroads

Faced with a diminishing share of an expanding market, today's independent general auto repair outlet is at the crossroads, according to a report released by Bank of America.

Will the garage owner become a businessman and update his operation, or will he be bypassed by operators more proficient in merchandising and management? The best answer to this question, suggests the periodical Small Business Reporter, is for the garage owner to build his business in a different way from his competitors.

THE GARAGE owner should emphasize quality, service and individual attention, but he must also be able to look at his competitors.

We are as helpless to bolt the process of improvement and change as were the cave men. Our hope is that we are wiser now, that we can see the implications of what is happening, and that we can maximize the advantage while minimizing the harm.

and glean all he can from them so he can strengthen his place—as an independent—in the automotive service industry."

The growing auto market, combined with an increased demand for auto services and the fact that both these factors have grown faster than the number of good mechanics and service outlets, suggests a promising potential for the would-be garage owner, the report notes. The picture is even rosier in California, which contains more than 10 per cent of all registered vehicles in the United States. However, there are now about 6,700 general auto repair establishments in California, the same number as in 1958, which suggests the independents are not realizing their full growth potential.

ON THE OTHER hand, service stations and discount department stores with service centers have increased their share of the business, as have low margin volume shops.



HOLIDAY GUESTS . . . Mr. and Mrs. William Herrmann of 2556 El Dorado pose with Gabriele Moretti (back, center) and his brother, Piercarlo during the Christmas holidays. Gabriele lived with the Herrmanns while attending Torrance High as a American Field Service exchange student and is now attending Cal Tech. Piercarlo is an AFS student in Sandy, Ore., and traveled to Torrance for the holidays. The boys live in Turin, Italy.

Today's garage owner is faced with the task of rebuilding an image of trust and competence. "A repair job that has been long neglected," the report states,

"Only the owner who changes his ways, improves his shop's image, and adapts his business to his customers' needs will survive."

"American people or any other people are entitled to whatever they are willing to work for and earn." — Mabel V. Rubbish, Burbank, on medicare.

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