

More Worries and More Wonders of Automation

By ALPHONZO BELL, Congressman, 28th District

Worry about the worry of automation has become increasingly evident among businessmen and opinion molders in recent months. Appearing almost simultaneously on the newsstands in January were Look Magazine with a feature article by Senior Editor T. George Harris titled "Automation, We Can Handle It" and a Fortune Magazine piece "The Real News About Automation" which holds that the effect of automation on employment in the United States has been "wildly and irresponsibly exaggerated."

Both Harris and Fortune writer, Charles Silberman, seem anxious to quiet the anxiety felt by many workers who consider themselves, their jobs, and the whole economy, in jeopardy as a result of the burgeoning automation industry. These reporters are probably right.

The new electronic servomechanisms are unlikely to hit employment in this country with anything like tidal wave suddenness and destructive power. Already, however, a serious problem of structural displacement is occurring in our labor market.

SPECIFIC JOBS are done away with because new equipment is introduced in plants. At the same time jobs are created for people with different sets of skills. The tragedy is that so often today the work that needs to be done cannot be done because of lack of trained manpower. And men and women who need work are not trained for the vacancies that have opened.

Approve New Job Program

Some students now attending school in Torrance will be offered opportunities to earn spending money if an application for a new federal program submitted by the school district is approved.

The Board of Education approved the application Monday evening during a 45-minute meeting at West High School.

The application, being submitted under a section of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, calls for the district to employ from 75 to 100 students in "aide" jobs. Federal monies will provide 90 per cent of the costs, with the district underwriting its share through the provision of facilities, equipment, and personnel services.

Trustees agreed that no new jobs would be created in the district for the program. Work involves help in school libraries, offices, and on school grounds, according to Dr. Albert Posner, assistant superintendent of schools for instruction.

IN OTHER action, trustees: • Cancelled the Feb. 16 meeting because members will be attending a convention in Atlantic City, N.J.

• Authorized attendance for administrative staff members and the board at the California Association of Public School Business Officials conference in Los Angeles.

• Awarded a contract for stenographers for the West High secretarial skills laboratory. Griswold Dictation Systems got the contract which is valued at \$2,169. Half the cost will be paid by funds from the National Defense Education Act.

• Authorized soil tests at Adams Elementary School to determine the foundation requirements for new construction at the school.

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Weighing the job destroying effects of automation against the job producing effects has become a burden to economists in the United States. While specific figures are difficult to collect, the American Foundation on Automation and Employment suggests that automation is a major factor causing the elimination of 40,000 jobs a week, or more than two million a year. George Meany, head of the AFL-CIO, reported to a convention of his members in New York recently that men are losing jobs to machines at the rate of 80,000 per week, or four million a year.

Whichever figures are correct, it is apparent that major changes are taking place in the national labor market and that automation is contributing significantly to the problem. Some authorities who concede the shock wave now being felt by our economy because of the technological dislocation of workers believe that private and government programs will be able to provide the necessary manpower training and vocational guidance. I do not share this optimism. Preparing younger generations for changes certain to come is one matter. The counseling of middle age workers who

suddenly find themselves jobless has proved to be something else again.

RUPTURES in labor-management relations over differing views of the solution to this problem are certain to come. Company provided educational programs, no less than guaranteed work time, will be underscored by union negotiators in the years ahead. Even union management will have a new responsibility. It will be to provide guidance, training, and retraining in order to protect and serve membership.

What is taking place is inevitable and it is important that all of us are mindful of

its potential blessings even though we may be concerned about pain in the process of transition. Two years ago George Meany called automation "essential to the general welfare, the economic strength and defense of the

nation." Meany is not unmindful of the threat to the labor movement which automation poses. He has, however, set an example of acceptance which many of the rest of us might follow.

CANADIAN LANDMARK
The smoke stack at International Nickel's iron ore recovery plant at Copper Cliff, Ontario, is the tallest in the British Commonwealth. Standing 637 feet high on a 22-foot base, the stack is almost two-thirds the height of the famed Eiffel Tower in Paris.

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