

MACHINE AGE SPURRED ON BY EFFECTS OF DEPRESSION

Thousands Out of Work Have Devoted Time To Inventing Devices Doing Away With Labor; Man-Hour Productivity Increased Also

(By Frederic J. Haskin)

Washington, Aug. 23—In spite of deliberate efforts to retard its juggernaut progress, the machine age continues to march on and technological improvements are displacing workers even more rapidly than they were before the beginning of the depression.

Eliminate Own Jobs

The depression itself speeded up the progress of the machine age. Thousands of individuals, out of work for the first time in their lives, utilized their enforced leisure for trying to perfect mechanical devices for which they had no time when on the job. The number of new inventions made during the depressed years is amazing. Many of them relate to the very work which their inventors were engaged on and tend to prevent those inventors from being re-employed at their old jobs. The old jobs have been eliminated. The situation almost approximates the idea of jumping in a hole and pulling the hole in after one.

The real test of productivity is the pre-man-test base. During a period of record prosperity the period from 1923 to 1929, the man-hour productivity increased slightly more than 4 per cent. In the four depression years, therefore, the rate of increase was faster than in the six preceding years of prosperity.

Governments were able to dictate that certain work be done in the manner calculated to create a maximum of employment. For example, a county would award a contract for building roads. It would be provided that none of the modern road-building machinery which makes quick work of any job be used. Some contracts have gone so far as to require that only horse-drawn scrapers be used. One interesting case reported on from a New Jersey county showed that if machinery were used on a certain road-building job, 20 men only would be required and the job could be done in a month. Without the use of machinery, 100

men would be required and the work would take all summer. In such circumstances it is up to the authorities to decide whether to get the most for the taxpayers' money by permitting the use of machinery or to provide a maximum of employment regardless of cost.

Competition Ruthless

In private industry other factors govern. Competition is ruthless and in hard times becomes more ruthless than ever. Every short cut must be taken advantage of. Where labor can be displaced it will be. Private industry cannot afford to be eleemosynary. Not only will the latest thing in mechanical equipment be used. Every effort will be made to speed up the output of each worker. When jobs are scarce, each worker is on his toes.

A study of figures compiled by the federal reserve board and the United States bureau of labor statistics reveals that man-hour productivity has increased to such an extent that for every 10 pounds of goods, every 10 units of any kind, produced by each worker in 1929 that worker produces 12½ in 1934. It is obvious that as this movement progresses, more and more workers are displaced each year. Fewer men can produce the same amount of goods.

In times of high prosperity, when there is an expanding market, the effects of technological displacement are not so strongly felt. If one job disappears, the activity of trade produces another. When trade is diminishing or even standing still, then the utter disappearance of certain jobs becomes a problem hard to solve.

What keeps the hive of industry humming is buying power among the masses. The bottom of the depression was reached, according to accepted bases, in March, 1933. Then the combined buying power of all workers in the United States, according to studies made by the American Federation of Labor on the basis of government statistics, was 46 per cent. Below where it stood in 1929 before the depression. The buying power was partially restored through the various recovery efforts but, with all that has been done, it now is 29 per cent. below what it was in 1929.

Business activity this summer is 15.6 per cent. greater than it was a year ago. The problem is to restore purchasing power to such an extent that an effectual demand can be brought to bear on the nation's industries. When it is stated that business activities is 15.6 per cent. better than last year, attention should be given to the fact that to attain full restoration it would have to be about 100 per cent. better than last year. The 15.6 per cent. improvement seems a heartening development, and it is, in that any improvement is significant, but the long pull still ahead must not be lost sight of.

The improvement in buying power so far has been brought about almost wholly by government expenditures. The NRA codes have had some effect but not nearly as much as the pouring forth of treasury money on public works projects. Certain wage minima were increased by the NRA and employment was created to some extent by shortening hours, but the vast relief programs of the federal government, the cities, and the states are chiefly responsible for placing money in the pockets of the people.

The question now urgently rising before the nation's leaders is how long this horn-of-plenty act can be kept going. Tax increases have been sufficient to enable the government about to keep even with current running expenses, but the great tide of relief expenditures has flowed from borrowings. The treasury never before has borrowed at such low rates of interest, but nevertheless, the debt burden has mounted to record peacetime levels and is still on its way up. Even the lowest interest rates become burdensome when they must be paid on so much.

In 1929, bank loans to private business amounted to \$50,000,000,000 approximately. They now are down to only \$22,000,000,000. When that huge amount of capital was being used by private industry, more wealth was being created; diverted to the treasury, more wealth is not being created.

STEALING OLD DOBBIN WORSE THAN CAR THEFT

Washington, Aug. 23—The American Automobile Association said today that old dobbin may have lost prestige in this automobile age, but it is a greater crime in the eye of the law to steal a horse than a car.

Surveying the state laws on the subject, the association said "the average car is worth more than twice the average horse in barter or United States currency, but horse theft is often a felony where car theft is merely a misdemeanor."

"It may all date back to the fact that in bygone days men were often hanged for stealing a 'bang-tail.'" the association said. "Anyway, the whole thing indicates that old and complicated laws are still in existence in some states."

The association cited eighteen states and the District of Columbia where the penalty for stealing a horse is greater than stealing an automobile.

SOO TAX SALE WILL INVOLVE 590 HOMES

SAULT STE. MARIE, Ont., Aug. 23—City Treasurer C. W. McCrea said today that 590 city dwellings will be offered for sale next December on account of unpaid taxes. Taxes outstanding on the properties amount to \$76,000.

It will be the first tax sale held here in three years.

Vienna, August 23—Martial law in Vienna, effective since the Nazi putsch of July 25, is lifted.

Officers can tell a hunted criminal from an innocent by-stander. If he's innocent, they don't miss him.

PRIMITIVE TOWN IN JAPAN DROPS CLOTHES DURING HEAT

Children Only Wear What They Brought Into the World With Them

Aw-Kaminato, Japan, August 23 — This village is primitive. Which means to say that those persons fortunate enough to live in so attractive an inlet do pretty much what they want to do. When it is hot, they go without clothes. Today is one of the hottest days of the hottest season of the year. If you look through the open doors and sliding panels of straw-thatched cottages you will find men, women and children divested of everything.

In the evening you will find some of the local gentry strolling along the village street with nothing more on than a loin cloth. Up the small valley you will find women working in the rice paddies with little more on than a skirt that commences at the waist and ends at the ankle. Children wear nothing more than what they brought into the world with them.

And yet there is modesty and decency and hospitality and good humor.

Inn Bound To Rocks

The one semi-attractive Japanese inn protrudes over the rock inlet. Long slender iron thongs bind it to the rocks lest some stormy night it may not be there.

Villagers point with justifiable pride to one of the really great Buddhist temples at the end of the village street a short distance from where the road sinks under the earth. It was founded by the priest Nichiren, 700 years ago. Nichiren was a sort of Buddhist Savonarola, a man who fought against established forms of faith, a man described by G. B. Sansom as having completed the long process by which Buddhism, from India via China, as assimilated and made Japanese.

Post Cards For Tourists

Picture post-card sellers have opened booths just outside the temple compound for the tourists and pilgrims who are bound some day to come. A similar scene might be found in any small cathedral town of Europe. Instead of the cross is the symbol of the lotus.

In the wooden windmills, though not all farmers have yielded to this modern invention and some still send their sons and daughters out to work a primitive treadmill to bring water to the surface.

Along the beaches at Katsura, Ubara and Onjuku villages are raking seaweed into piles for drying. This they will pack and ship to Tokyo, where it is molded into thin sheets and becomes an important staple in the national diet.

Fish Is Dried In Sun

Fish is dried in the open sun. Great chunks of dried fish as hard as a piece of wood and in shape devoid of all semblance of a fish leave here for all parts of the Japanese empire. Baked, broiled and raw fish and weak fish soup is the village diet. Seldom if

ever do you see bread, but if you are a foreign visitor you may merit broiled eggs for breakfast as a concession.

At Katsura, which has its own Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, the first signs of undesirable modernity are creeping in. A stolid Japanese painter and decorator is standing in full view of the main street painting screens, and hangings for a modern cafe. On one of them he has already painted the crude portrait of a Negro quaffing a cocktail. Later, when the decorations are in place, a phonograph will be installed, village girls will be educated in how to entertain—which means how to pour beer—and the village youths will be expected to spend their evenings there apeing what they will be pleased to call American manners. They have seen this in the movies and in Tokyo and it will not be long before even this backwoods town and its neighboring villages will succumb.

Meantime, these youths and village girls seem content enough. Today they congregated at the village school and listened to a program. Home talent, but satisfying.

HUNGRY GRASSHOPPERS

Marion, Kan., Aug. 23—The drought is making it tough on the grasshopper—and tougher still on Abe Wertz's clothing.

When Wertz went into a field to do some work, hungry grasshoppers jumped on him and began chewing on his shirt. By the time he got home the garment was perforated with small holes.

A Cincinnati hotel operator offers a reward of \$25 to any employee who suggests a proper title for "bellboys", who no longer answers bells, or "bell-hops" who no longer hop, if indeed they ever did. And to complicate the riddle, not many of them are boys at this time in hotel history.

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