

The Coming of the Robot News Reporters

Over the years, the news media, both print and electronic, have lost large numbers of jobs to technology, and yet they face another round of job loses to machines.

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Saturday, the 6 of December, 1941, the world was looking good for the American people. The economy was finally starting to look up, jobs were opening up, plus people were starting to have a little money to spend. The long depression seemed to be finally coming to an end, everything getting better for the people of the United States.



Then a day later, it all came crashing down!

Almost everyone was shocked and stunned that America was suddenly at war. The Japanese had unexpectedly bombed us at Pearl Harbor. Almost no one expected a war, despite ample warning signs and the multitude of world events for the last several years. Complete surprise! And why? Because people face difficult and complex problems by 'denial'. First stage of cancer is denial. That's exactly what the people of America did for the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, the net result was the Bataan Death March, the daily dying at Camp O'Donnell, then Camp Cabanatuan, then the six months of unholy hell of fighting and dying on Guadalcanal . . . all because America was so unprepared. Despite the mirid of signs and indications of a coming war, America lived a denial and ignored the coming of a distasteful unwanted war. So we only succeeded in bringing untold additional pain, suffering, misery and death to thousands . . . tens of thousands or more of our kinsmen than if we had simply stood up and faced the coming storm and prepared for it.

This is the price paid for denial.

For the last few years I have written about the problems being faced by the millennials and generation-Z from technology continually taking their jobs leaving them with lesser and lower paying jobs . . . or no job at all! I've continually tried to interest those in the news media, both print and electronic, of the growing problem Americans face. But to no avail! I face the 'denial' phenomena as reporters avoid one of the biggest stories unfolding before them, careful not to recognize what is happening and fearing what might happen to them. Which is rather ironic, since the news media, both print and electronic, have over the decades experienced tremendous

reductions of jobs once needed to gather, process and distribute the news. While in college, I worked as an electronics technician at a television station and witnessed the coming of technologies which whittled away jobs. Indeed, I almost got caught by one of those emerging technologies, which nearly capsized my plans for returning to college.

So having had their career fields devastated by a myriad of new technologies, you'd think news reporters might have some interest about the future, because it isn't over yet! Many of the components are all ready here. IBM's new AI technology Watson of Jeopardy fame, is able to follow developing stories on the internet and wire services to collect relevant information. There are now several software packages for writing stories and scripts given relevant information, so a program could write and edit scripts for radio or television news announcers. Speech synthesizer software is very well developed that can read the scripts on air. That takes care of radio, but more is needed for television.

You may have seen recent news reports of Deepfake, a new sophisticated computer program that takes the image of a person and superimposes a talking face to give a fake statement or speech. This would allow models to be hired, filmed and a tape library built up where a model's image would have a face with speech superimposed to give a news caster reading the news stories . . . except doing it perfectly every time. Shades of the sci-fi movie 'Looker' generating electronic digital workers at the press of a button. A cavalcade of 'super sexy empty headed' news casters tirelessly working 24/7 and reading the news perfectly, and this would work since news is now just another arena of entertainment.

The mechanization of news reporting isn't something new. The Linotype machine to replace human typesetters revolutionized typesetting in 1884, so far fewer people were required to print daily newspapers. That mechanization has continued relentlessly, with recent stories predicting there will be no daily newspapers in ten years. The daily papers were first displaced by radio news, then television, and now the internet, all the while workers are given their pink slips and replaced with machines. The same process is ongoing for the other news media. All this and more, yet the news media is surprisingly quiet about machines replacing them, or for that matter, any other workers in America. You'd think the possibility of losing your job would spark interest in knowing how you might be replaced . . . yet nothing.

Just like at Pearl Harbor, everyone is careful not to look and see.

Just wait for the hammer to fall! And hope another job can be found . . .

Complex difficult problems don't solve themselves- they just get worst. Except it's not getting worst just for the various news services, it's getting worst for everyone else too. And without the Fourth Estate (news reporting) leading all the rest of Americans to face and address this problem, nothing will get done. Those we elect to govern us will continue their endless 'monkey fighting' and avoid this problem, leaving the rest of us to be hung out to dry.