

A Modern Industrial Revolution

Emma Ventura

The young minds of America rush towards a bright future of self driving cars, surgery performing robots, and completely automated classrooms; however, following in their ancestors' footsteps they forget about how this new technology will affect the working class. Two hundred years ago America experienced an explosion of new technology that completely changed the way goods were manufactured and transported. This greatly benefited the wealthy business owners but may not have been favorable for all Americans. Our country is on the verge of history repeating itself with a new industrial revolution that could have the same negative effects on our blue-collar workers. Robots are being used throughout the country as a replacement for human labor, thus putting millions of Americans out of work and in poverty. Though these new ideas seem inventive and exciting they will play a crucial role in the downfall of America's working class.

While the outcome of the Industrial Revolution was an unquestionable success for the upper class, those less fortunate than them suffered greatly with the coming of new technology to the United States. The time from the late 1700's to the early 1800's was known as the Industrial Revolution. During this time inventions like the spinning jenny, steam powered engine, and the telegraph were introduced into America. These machines replaced human labor and dragged Americans into dangerous factories where they were forced to work long hours in awful conditions and earned barely enough to survive on. "While industrialization brought about an increased volume and variety of manufactured goods and an improved standard of living for some, it also resulted in often grim employment and living conditions for the poor and working classes." (History.com Editors). While the working class suffered, the top 1% of the country

watched over the country making more money than was needed. Transportation and technology advanced leaving the people these machines were replacing in the gutters fighting for their right to survive.

Two hundred years later America is on the cusp of a modern Industrial Revolution. This transformation is sweeping the country, starting in places like Rhode Island where our forefathers began theirs. Stores like Stop and Shop and Shaw's replace their valuable and beloved employees with cleaning robots and self checkouts in an attempt to save money. As of 2019, the Stop and Shop in Middletown RI is the proud owner of the mess finding, money saving robot, nicknamed "Marty". However, this may not be all good news, manager of a Stop and Shop in Pennsylvania refers to, "... something more concerning: potential for such technology to take union jobs away, though Marty is now in the 'modest beginning phases.'" (Moser) in a recent interview. While this googly eyed robot gives a harmless impression, his inevitable upgrades may mean downsizing for companies and more families in poverty. The first self checkout machine in America was installed in 1997 in New York and has since then spread like wildfire through American business. Researchers expect that by the end of 2019 America will be home to over 325,000 self checkout machines. While these machines seem to provide convenience for shoppers and a larger profit for business owners, they will have disastrous results for the working class. Automation is beginning to replace human labor, this issue is directly affecting the livelihood of our communities and needs to be addressed before it destroys lives.

These robots and their successors have the ability to take vital positions from America's laborers. Research scientist, McKinsey, says that by 2030 one third of American workers will be put out of work by automation. These jobs include predictable tasks such as factory production fast food work, because they simple and require no thought or personality. McKinsey says,

“Even as it causes declines in some occupations, automation will change many more – 60 percent of occupations have at least 30 percent of constituent work activities that could be automated.” (McKinsey). This means that one third of Americans will be out of work and in poverty without the ability to provide for themselves or their families. As Americans our goal should be to provide more jobs for those already in poverty and share the wealth, not take away more jobs from those who need them. The only one’s benefitted by the use of automation are the business owners who will profit at the dispense of the lower class. The top 1% of Americans own 43% of the financial wealth in America and the bottom 80% share 7% of the wealth, this gap should be decreasing not growing larger. Much like in the Industrial Revolution where this problem arose putting families in horrible living conditions while the factory owners prospered with more money than they could ever need or use. In the next decade robots are expected to replace millions of Americans in the workforce letting the top 1% of Americans control all of the wealth in the country and crushing the workforce, as a community we need to provide jobs not take them away.

The modern Industrial Revolution has the opportunity to put millions of Americans out of work and onto the street. Two centuries ago America went through a complete change of the transportation and manufacturing systems, with a complete disregard for the lives and well beings of the working class. This revolution put Americans in dangerous and unimaginable conditions for the sake of a larger profit. Now we are faced with the same challenge, America is on the verge of a robotic revolution that could and will put millions of people out of work. Stores like Shaws, Stop and Shop, and many others are beginning to replace their employees with robots they believe are a better option. These robots will upgrade and replace more and more blue-collar jobs, leaving millions of people without the ability to provide. Communities need to

decide about what is more important to them, convenience or the well beings of their neighbors?

In a country already divided by rich and poor our goal should be the bridge this gap by educating and creating jobs for everyone not replacing them with and inanimate object.

Works Cited

Editors, History.com. "Industrial Revolution." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 29 Oct.

2009, www.history.com/topics/industrial-revolution/industrial-revolution.

Franck, Thomas. "McKinsey: One-Third of US Workers Could Be Jobless by 2030 Due to

Automation." *CNBC*, CNBC, 29 Nov. 2017, www.cnbc.com/2017/11/29/one-third-of-us-workers-could-be-jobless-by-2030-due-to-automation.html.

Hamacher, Adriana. "Future - The Unpopular Rise of Self-Checkouts (and How to Fix Them)."

BBC News, BBC, 10 May 2017, www.bbc.com/future/story/20170509-the-unpopular-rise-of-self-checkouts-and-how-to-fix-them.

Moser, Erica. "What's the Deal with Marty, the Stop & Shop Robot?" *The Day*, 2 Mar. 2019,

www.theday.com/article/20190301/BIZ02/190309916.