

O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

As a taxpaying member and a lover of the Sisters community, I am dismayed by the negative attention directed towards what generally is thought of as a positive thing — a trail through the woods — in this case, the trail from Sisters to Black Butte Ranch.

While I understand property owners are always concerned about "others" being in or near their neighborhood, (believe me, I've lived in a large city), I'm bemused by the outpouring of what appears to be fear — which clearly comes across as opposition coming from a certain sector of the Sisters community.

I also understand that some people are concerned that taxpayer money has been and may continue to be used to pay for the project and costs associated with the project. But that's what taxpayer dollars are for — to pay for projects that benefit taxpayers.

I'm sorry to see that the Forest Service has abandoned its plans to move forward on this trail, yet I am hopeful that the community will resubmit a proposal. I particularly applaud Deschutes County Commissioner Alan Unger's outreach to Oregon Solutions — an Oregon-based solutions finding group —

form a committee of representatives to look at economic, environmental and community objectives and come to an integrated solution that benefits all.

This takes collaboration and representation from all concerned parties, and eliminates one group from dominating the discussion. It also assures that all stakeholders will be heard. I know this and have experienced it because I currently serve on an Oregon Solutions team. As the representative of a small neighborhood that sits in the center of a huge storm of federal, state, county, regional, city and port concerns, we lived in fear of being overshadowed by lawyered, well-funded public agencies and large businesses (see Columbia River Repair and Accreditation; orsolutions.org/osproject/MCDD). Yet we were not. With measured and consistent participation, we were able to voice our concerns, relate the importance of our neighborhood, and state the value of our community in this regional matter. Individual landowners were also heard; the process makes room for all.

I hope Commissioner Unger is successful in his mission, and that Governor

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Slt. chance rain 58/31	Mostly sunny 70/38	Sunny 72/37	Partly sunny 64/35	Mostly sunny 65/32	Partly sunny 64/na

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Robert B. Reich

American Voices

It's now possible to sell a new product to hundreds of millions of people without needing many, if any, workers to produce or distribute it.

At its prime in 1988, Eastman Kodak, the iconic American photography company, had more than 145,000 employees. In 2012, Kodak filed for bankruptcy.

The same year Kodak went under, Instagram, the world's newest photo company, had 13 employees serving 30 million customers.

The ratio of producers to customers continues to plummet. When Facebook purchased "WhatsApp" (the messaging app) for \$19 billion last year, WhatsApp had 55 employees serving 450 million customers.

A friend, operating from his home in Tucson, AZ, recently invented a machine that can find particles of certain elements in the air. He's already sold hundreds of these machines over the Internet to customers worldwide. He's manufacturing them in his garage with a 3-D printer. So far, his entire business depends on just one person — himself.

New technologies aren't just labor-replacing. They're also knowledge-replacing.

The combination of advanced sensors, voice recognition, artificial intelligence, big data, text-mining and pattern-recognition algorithms is generating smart robots capable of quickly learning human actions, and learning from one another.

If you think being a "professional" makes your job safe, think again. The two sectors of the economy harboring the most professionals, healthcare and education, are under increasing pressure to cut costs. Expert machines are poised to take over.

We're on the verge of a wave of mobile health apps for measuring everything from your cholesterol to your blood pressure, along with diagnostic software that tells you what it means and what to do about it.

In coming years, software apps will be doing many of the things physicians, nurses and technicians now do (think ultrasound, CT scans and electrocardiograms).

Meanwhile, the jobs of many teachers and university professors will disappear,

replaced by online courses and interactive textbooks.

When more and more can be done by fewer and fewer people, the profits go to an ever-smaller circle of executives and owner-investors.

One of the young founders of WhatsApp, CEO Jan Koum, had a 45 percent equity stake in the company when Facebook purchased it, which yielded him \$6.8 billion. Cofounder Brian Acton got \$3 billion for his 20 percent.

Each of the early employees reportedly had a 1 percent stake, which presumably netted them \$160 million each.

Meanwhile, the rest of us will be left providing the only things technology can't provide: person-to-person attention, human touch, and care. But these sorts of person-to-person jobs pay very little.

That means most of us will have less and less money to buy the dazzling array of products and services spawned by blockbuster technologies — because those same technologies will be supplanting our jobs and driving down our pay.

We need a new economic model. The economic model that dominated most of the 20th century was mass production by the many, for mass consumption by the many. Workers were consumers; consumers were workers. As paychecks rose, people had more money to buy all the things they and others produced, like Kodak cameras. That resulted in more jobs and even higher pay.

That virtuous cycle is now falling apart. A future of almost unlimited production by a handful, for consumption by whoever can afford it, is a recipe for economic and social collapse.

Our underlying problem won't be the number of jobs. It will be, it already is, the allocation of income and wealth.

What to do? "Redistribution" has become a bad word. But the economy toward which we're hurtling can't function.

It may be that a redistribution of income and wealth from the rich owners of breakthrough technologies to the rest of us becomes the only means of making the future economy work.

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