

The Story of Automation--Part III

Humans Still Enjoy Big Bulge Over Mechanical Devices

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The average man uses only about 10 per cent of his brain power, and this has caused many frightening predictions that some day he will build a machine so smart that it will overwhelm the human race. Rest easy. We still have a big bulge over the mechanical devices we are creating.

Computers can do many marvelous things, but they cannot think. They are helpless unless a human being feeds into them accurate information. Once they get the information, they can come up with the answer at a speed which the human brain cannot match. The DuPont Co. once used a computer to solve within 30 hours a chemical problem that would have taken a man 20 years on the arithmetic alone.

Computers have infallible memories. They can store away vast numbers of facts and reach for the right one at the right time. No human brain could carry the mass of information that a computer handles with ease. Several years ago the United States Treasury purchased a computer that did the work of 450 clerks.

Automation embraces many things besides computers. Drive through the countryside at harvest time and you will understand immediately why there has been a surge from the farms to the cities. Machines are doing the work that men used to do. Or step into a modern building with self service

elevators and press a button for your floor. Automatic elevators have thrown 40,000 men and women out of work in New York City alone.

All Have It

Every factory of any size in the nation has some degree of automation, and the machines are formidable looking things. But the computers are the glamorous boys of automation because they seem to come closer than anything else to the process of thinking.

They come in all shapes and sizes and prices. International Business Machines has a data processing system designed to solve business and scientific problems. It rents for \$70,000 a month or sells for \$3,134,500.

Computers can compose simple tunes, but Richard Rogers and Irving Berlin are not going to be put out of business immediately because the machines can't cope with such intricate musical constructions as "Some Enchanted Evening" and "White Christmas." Computers can write simple poems if you feed them the right stuff. You have to put a rhyme scheme of words (June and moon) into their memory banks, indicate the meter desired and the subject of the poem. Shakespeare still sounds much better. Computers can play chess and checkers with skill simply because all possible moves are stored away and the right one can be summoned instantly.

All of these things attract at-

ention because with them we seem to be moving toward a "thinking machine" that has human brain power and intuition. But they are not the things that cause the furious controversy over automation. What the argument is all about is computers that replace people. Several years ago the Southern Railroad put a computer to work on its accounting and statistical problems. It saved the

company \$80,000 in the first year of operation. It also replaced some people.

By now most of the experts have taken their stand on the effects of automation on our daily lives. Generally speaking, management people contend automation will create more jobs than it eliminates. Unions argue the contrary and keep pressing for immediate action to provide work for persons

they are confident will be thrown out of their jobs by machines.

In this swirling battle it is unusual to find a manufacturer of automation machines who, in many respects, agrees with the unions and speaks his views frankly. He is John I. Snyder, president and chairman of the board of U.S. Industries, Inc., New York. Last month he went before the national convention

of the AFL-CIO and spoke his piece. He attacked what he called "the myths of automation."

—That automation does not eliminate jobs. Snyder: "Detroit is the center of automation and as a result is one of our country's largest and most critical unemployment areas."

work. Snyder: "If the equivalent number of workers replaced by automation were required to build the machines and systems, there would be no point in automating."

—That unemployed persons can be retrained to work in automated offices and factories. Snyder: "In Huntington, W.Va., more than 1,800 hard-core unemployed were notified about an area redevelopment training

program. Only 640 took the aptitude tests and only 240 qualified."

Form Partnership
Snyder, of course, is not trying to halt the sale of his own machines, but he insists the time has come to stop talking about automation and do something. He has taken the first step by forming with the machinists union an organization called "The American Founda-

tion on Automation and Employment." A. J. Hayes, president of the union, is co-chairman of the foundation.

The announced purpose of the foundation is to find some formula under which Snyder can keep selling his machines and Hayes can keep his men working.

Next: More leisure for the worker: Blessing or evil.

THE Lighter Side...
BY DICK WEST
Self-Correcting Secretary Needed



WASHINGTON (UPI) — The U. S. Patent Office issued a patent this week for a "self-correcting typewriter ribbon."

A secretary I know put one on her typewriter and it worked fine. The ribbon hasn't made a mistake yet.

Now if only someone will invent a self-correcting secretary, the world will be a better place in with to dictate.

Actually, the "self-correcting" label is a bit of a misnomer. The ribbon was not designed to correct its own mistakes but to make it easier for a secretary to correct hers.

William Wolowitz, a local man who invented it, has high hopes that it will become a commercial success. He conceded, however, that it is not a "panacea."

Still Slight Problem
In other words, the ribbon will not solve the problem of a secretary who can't spell "panacea." She will still need a dictionary. Or a smart office boy.

The fact that Wolowitz's invention is not the final answer to typing errors was demonstrated in a press release that I received from the Spellright Corp., which markets the ribbon.

Whoever typed the release goofed up the patent number. Made it 314447 instead of 3114447.

Had the secretary who typed the release caught the mistake at the time, she could have corrected it with the ribbon, which has an inked strip for typing and chalked strip for erasing.

Here Is Procedure
The procedure is as follows: Backspace to the first 4 and strike the key again with the ribbon in the chalk position. That would erase it. Then backspace again and hit the figure 1 with the ribbon in the ink position.

That done, the secretary would finish typing the release. Or perhaps take a coffee break.

Eventually, Wolowitz predicted, it will not be necessary to operate the ribbon shift lever to correct mistakes. He feels that typewriters of the future

should have an "error key" that would change the ribbon position automatically.

He feels that way because he also has invented an error key.

At present, the erasure part of the ribbon is white. Therefore, it only works on white paper. But Wolowitz said plans are afoot to produce it in pastel shades, which will make it possible to rectify colorful mistakes.

There is one problem, however, that has not been solved. The ribbon can only make erasures on one copy at a time.

That will prove to be a handicap for government secretaries, who make all of their mistakes in triplicate.

Italian Premier Faces Another Crucial Test

ROME (UPI) — Aldo Moro, bolstered by a vote of confidence from the chamber of deputies, today faced another crucial test in the Italian senate.

The senate debate is expected to end Saturday with another victory for Moro's new, center-left coalition government. Tuesday night the chamber voted in favor of the government by 350 to 233 with 4 abstentions and 43 absences.

But more trouble lay ahead for Vice Premier Pietro Nenni's left-wing Socialists, partners in the coalition with Moro's Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Republicans.

Twenty-five pro-Communists within the Socialist party walked out of the chamber Tuesday night rather than vote in favor of the coalition.

Measures Considered
The party's leaders called a meeting to consider disciplinary measures against the rebels, and a formal split within the ranks appeared almost certain in the next few days.

Apart from the secession by the pro-Communists and a one man revolt by right-wing Republican Randofo Pacciardi, the four-party coalition held fast. The margin of victory was considered solid.

Conservative Christian Democrats who had threatened to walk out to protest the new government's alleged weakness toward communism changed their minds following a Vatican appeal and voted to support Moro.

Corvallis-Philomath Gas Line Opened
PHILOMATH, Ore. (UPI) — Brief ceremonies Monday marked completion of a \$274,000 natural gas pipeline by Northwest Natural Gas Co. from Corvallis to Philomath.

Philomath is the 36th incorporated community in Oregon to be served by Northwest Natural.

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