

Automation May Eventually Take Over All Man's Work

By WARD CANNEL

GROTON, Conn. (NEA) — Nuclear submarines, our floating first line of defense being built here, may soon be run almost entirely by automation.

In New York City, a completely automated subway train (not a human hand anywhere) was just demonstrated. Others may follow shortly.

From Washington comes word that the Post Office Department is opening broadscale pilot programs to test automation for mail handling.

The battle of man vs. machines is over, the experts say. Man never stood a chance. Discussion of the matter is academic only, because:

—Automation, still in its infancy, can already think things out more clearly than man. The human brain, recent experiments show, scans its memory at a fast 10 cycles per second — but then often needs a psychiatrist of some sort to reach a decision.

Studies under way at Connecticut College for Women and the University of California are reportedly aimed at unlocking the secret of human decision-making so that man can better adapt to the world of automation. A typical question for study:

"How much information must an automated brain feed to a submarine skipper before he feels confident enough to make a decision?"

—Automation can learn a skill a whole lot faster than a man can learn it. If a man learns an error in the process, there is some doubt that he can ever unlearn it. But not so with a machine.

Scientists who built a machine

called Digiflex to teach postmen how to use automated mail sorting equipment report their machinery can learn the job with one run-through. An exceptional man needs five or six.

Even then, there's no way to figure in the human frailties like a sneeze, an itch, a vagrant thought. With the postal system going through 420 billion sorting operations per year, a human lapse could mean a bottleneck.

—To bring the problem to a close, automation is ahead of man in physiology as well.

According to a spokesman at the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics, the equipment that may replace men aboard nuclear submarines will need no food, oxygen, sleep, comic books or bunk. Besides, one machine stands all watches at its station.

Where does this leave man? Slave to a machine, critics of automation say. Or worse — out of a job.

Nonsense, the automation builders reply. Automation actually frees men from being machines.

In the words of Edwin Shelley, president of robot-building Robodyne, a division of U.S. Industries:

"What is the virtue in man's doing the same, endless, repetitive job on an assembly line where he merely puts together two small-parts of a much larger product?"

"The real wonder of man is his versatility. The human brain has 10 billion neurons. Do you know how much space a computer that size would require, how much cooling, how much energy?"

So, the first reassurance is: it's just not economically feasible to build a man.

And as for being replaced by a machine, the experts say, don't think of it as unemployment. It's actually a gift of leisure time — an opportunity to enjoy literature and music.

Robodyne is now working on two new pieces of automation equipment. One teaches folks how to read. The other, how to play the piano.



MAN IS USING an automated machine to teach woman how to operate automated equipment.

Seek Control Of Ragweed

An estimated 11,400 acres with ragweed infestation have been labeled "controlled" by sprayers from the Ragweed Control program, according to report from the State Department of Agriculture.

This is 1,100 acres more than was sprayed in 1959.

Several new infestations were located this year, according to the report: Five in Josephine County, two in Polk County, three in Marion County and one in Clackamas County in southeast Portland. These total about 550 acres.

Pollen trapping stations were set up at several locations in the control area. The American Academy of Allergy reported, as of October 12, the Portland area had a zero pollen count of ragweed for the entire season. Reading of slides from other areas has not been completed.

The primary purpose of the ragweed program is to reduce the pollen and seed count as much as possible. Soil sampling of known infested fields was started in 1959. Seed population counts are determined by washing samples through a series of screens and retaining the ragweed seed. On the soil samples in 1960, an apparent seed population reduction in each sample was found.

Infestation is checked as soon as it is reported. There continues to be some confusion, say officials, between tansy ragwort and ragweed, although the plants are not at all alike. Tansy ragwort is a biennial which rosettes the first year and at that time has a growth habit somewhat like the dandelion. The second year it grows upright about 30 inches and has large yellow flowers about the size of a quarter.

Ragweed is of two types, annual and perennial, which are difficult to differentiate. Ragweed has many green flowers about the size of a match head, growing in a "spike." The tiny flowers are a faint yellow in the pollen stage. The height varies from six inches to six feet. Ragweed tends to travel much more than ragwort.

Poet's Corner

THANKSGIVING DAY

May we lay our cares aside,
And on this Thanksgiving Day;
And render thanks unto God,
In a very Special way.

We will thank Him for health,
That we possess today;
And for our Liberty and Freedom
And in every thing we say.

The right to vote that is ours,
And worship as we please;
And for our Great Government
And its destinies.

We thank Him for our bounteous
crops,
And the turkey that we eat;
Trusting He will hear our prayers
While kneeling at His feet.

We thank Him for our loved ones,
Who make life worth the while;
Each Morning when we arise
The Sun we greet and smile.

So on this Special Day, Lord,
Our wants are very few;
We shall love and worship you
And give our thanks to You.

THE KLAMATH LAKE

I climbed the rim to its top,
And went the sage brush thru;
All my ills I soon forgot
In that Sea of blue.

The lake lay smooth and calm,
And glistened for many a mile;
The sunset kissed the waters blue
With God's own sweetest smile.

The shadows on the blue and gold,
Took away the light;
Creeping up McLoughlin's slope
Bringing down the night.

Along the sky in various lines,

Behold the gold and gray;
A background of eternal pines,
Stretching for miles away.

Juniper and Jackpines creep,
Where rock and waters blend;
Blue as crystals, in the deep
Mysterious shadows send.

Sunset clung to the mountains'
crown,
The Klamath Indians trod;
O'er dale and vale, he looked
down
And saw the hand of God.

He saw the fading dying light,
And heard the bullets whine;
But he was soon lost to sight,
Amidst the sleeping pines.

Darkness fell o'er peak and dell,
The stars were shining bright;
The twinkling diamonds in the
lake
Reflected thru the night.

The Brave no longer takes the
trail,
The Fox his friendship knew;
A wild goose cries his tender wail
In the evening's falling dew.
Chas. J. Hess
Box 512

HOW I KNOW

When the soft lights in the win-
dow,
Seem to have a special glow
And the sound of children singing
Echoes clearly o'er the snow,
When we've hung the boughs of
holly,
And a sprig of mistletoe.

When we get that special feeling
From our head down to our toe
IT'S CHRISTMAS,
Leola H. Thompson
2417 Darrow

Growth Of Postal Unit Reflects U.S. Growth

The growth of the U.S. postal service reflects the development of the country to a greater degree than any other agency of the federal government.

We Americans have the biggest mail service in the world. While the United States occupies only one-fifth of the land surface of the globe, we send and receive nearly two-thirds of the world's mail.

Our two largest post offices—New York and Chicago — each have postal receipts greater than our good neighbor to the north—Canada.

The Post Office Department has 540,000 employees.

It operates about 37,000 post offices, located in every part of the country.

Its expenses run more than one-half billion dollars a year.

Cash transactions on a yearly basis, including 400 million money orders, total more than 23 billion dollars.

The 32,000 rural carriers travel more than one and a half million miles a day.

The department operates a truck fleet using 85,000 motor vehicles, including 30,000 it owns.

It is now handling more than 60 billion pieces of mail annually, plus slightly more than a billion pieces of parcel post.

In the fiscal year ended on June 30, 1957, the latest for which final figures are available, there were 31 and one-half billion pieces of first class mail; nearly one and one-half billion pieces of domestic air mail; almost seven billion pieces of second class mail (magazines and newspapers); and about 18 billion pieces of third class mail (advertising matter and circulars).

Additionally, the Post Office Department handled approximately 370 million pieces of international surface mail and 190 million pieces of international air mail.

Franked mail, for which the Congress now pays postage, approximated 61 million pieces, and penalty mail sent by government agencies for which they now also pay postage, was slightly more than one and one-half billion pieces.

Fourth class mail, chiefly parcel post, totalled nearly six billion pounds in weight, and over a billion parcels.

In recent years, the mail volume in the United States has been increasing percentage-wise about twice as rapidly as our population has grown. Since 1945 United States mail volume has increased by nearly 19 billion pieces, which is more mail than the present yearly mail volume of France, Germany and Canada combined. The current yearly increase is nearly as great as Canada's yearly volume.

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