

'High tech': no panacea, but no bogeyman either

THE NEW industrial revolution of the 1980s is far different from the 18th and 19th century industrial revolutions.

Our history books told tales of workmen — and they were "workmen," not "workers" — destroying machinery because it would displace them. It would be nearly impossible to do the same thing today, industrial security being what it is.

Upton Sinclair in "The Jungle" described the deadening impact of machinery on craftsmanship.

"Where Jurgis worked there was a machine which cut and stamped a certain piece of steel about two square inches in size; the pieces came tumbling out upon a tray, and all that human hands had to do was to pile them in regular rows, and change the tray at intervals. This was done by a single boy. . . Thirty thousand of these pieces he handled every day, nine or 10 millions every year — how many in a lifetime it rested with the gods to say."

THESE TALES came to mind as Michigan state government under William Milliken committed itself to high technology at the opening of the 1980s.

And so when Ronald R. Watcke of Troy proposed a series of articles putting high technology in perspective, I was intrigued.

Unlike many prospective columnists who call or write, Watcke had nothing to sell — no dental or law practice to push, no political axe to grind. His academic background is in history and education. He was dean of vocational education at Wayne County Community College because of his administrative background, not engineering; he is currently dean of liberal arts at WCC.

His columns are far from sensational. Truth rarely is. But if you have been following them since Aug. 18, you will have picked up a realistic grasp of what high technology is all about.

It's no bogeyman. It's no panacea for our economic and industrial problems.

THERE ARE high technology industries, such as electric equipment, instruments and transportation equipment. There are "low tech" industries such as



Tim Richard

steel and textiles which use high tech processes such as computers and automated factory systems — so he pointed out in his first article.

In contrast to the situation described by Upton Sinclair, Watcke points out that "many workers will experience an upgrading of occupational skills and a healthy dose of retraining to keep abreast of the rapid technological changes."

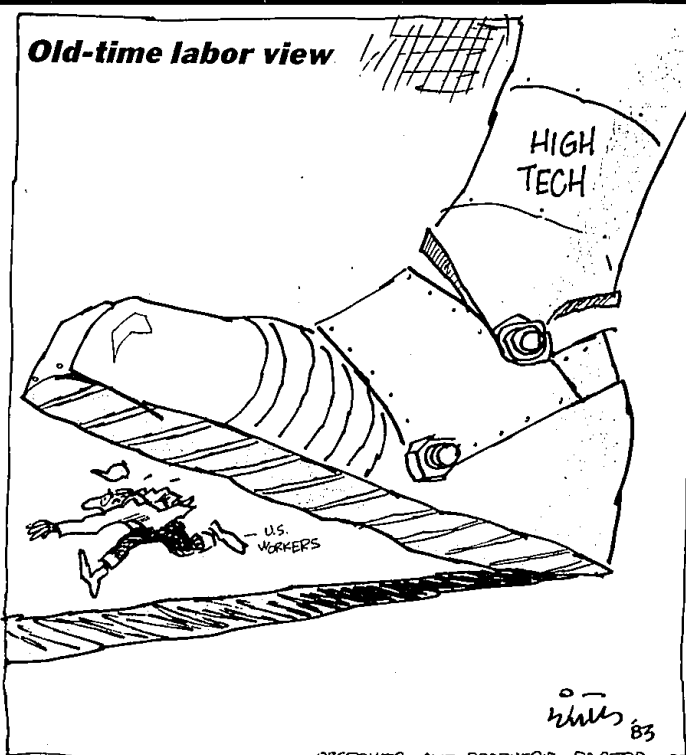
High tech employment opportunities are increasing by leaps and bounds — somewhere between 30 and 90 percent by 1990. But you have to consider that these are the leaps and bounds of an infant. High tech's proportion of the total job market increase will be only 8 percent or less by 1990. That was from Watcke's Aug. 25 quiz.

THE NOTION that metropolitan Detroit can become a high tech leader is more than rhetoric. "I believe Detroit has the clear-cut advantage (over Chicago) based on its international reputation as the leading tool manufacturing and metal machine center," Watcke said. Already, 100 to 125 high tech firms are located in a ridge from Troy to Farmington Hills to Ann Arbor.

On Sept. 22, he uncovered a quote from General Motors Chairman Roger B. Smith: "Every time the cost of labor goes up \$1 an hour, 1,000 more robots become economical." American factories have 7,000 robots today. By 1990 there will be 35,000 robots.

One gets the clear impression high tech is neither as frightening nor as much a boon as it's cracked up to be. If you're looking for a picture of either hell or heaven, try another news medium.

Old-time labor view



Indian Guides give children quality time

A FRIEND called to tell me about a program he and his son had joined. They would both dress up like Indians and go to meetings.

It sounded silly, but my friend was a no-nonsense type, so I asked him for more information. After attending a meeting of about six fathers and sons, I decided to join.

That was my introduction to Indian Guides, a program designed to foster a close relationship between one parent and one child.

That year, my son and I attended one meeting a month, went on one outing a month and camped out twice.

Both of us had a good time and I think learned something about each other. That was eight years ago.

When the school year ended, Indian Guides was over. The next school year, there were distractions. I guess you could call me a dropout. I haven't thought much about it since.

ON MONDAY I read in our Farmington newspaper about the start of the new year for Indian Guides. I called Vic Kruppenbacher, program director for the Farmington Y, to find out about the changes in Indian Guides in the past eight years. (Programs are sponsored by Ys.)

As expected, there have been. The idea of promoting better relationships between father and son has expanded. It's now called Indian Family Programs and includes both sexes.

The new programs are: Indian Princess (father/daughter), Indian Maidens (mother/daughter), and Indian Braves (mother/son).

"As women have changed their roles, so have our



Nick Sharkey

programs," Kruppenbacher said. "Today many mothers are working full time and don't get to spend much time with their children. Some mothers are divorced and looking for ways to spend limited, but quality, time with their children."

Indian Maidens were added in Farmington four years ago. This is the second year for Indian Braves.

All of the Indian programs are doing well, according to Kruppenbacher. More than 300 families in the Farmington area participate.

"We get many positive comments from the families," Kruppenbacher said. "Most new people join because of recommendations from friends already in Indian Family Programs. Also, we get many repeat parents who re-enter with younger children."

BASED ON MY one year's experience, I'd recommend Indian Family programs to any parent. I never changed my mind about a grown man looking silly wearing an Indian headdress and vest. But that's not the point of the program.

It's difficult for a parent to give a child individual attention. The Indian program requires that time be spent together without the normal distractions. Family Ys in your area are signing up new people. Indian programs are for children 5-9. Children 10-14 can join Trail Blazers.

The Birmingham Y will hold an organizational meeting for Troy residents at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 27. Rochester-area residents can register at 7:30 p.m. at University Hills Elementary on Sept. 27. An information night will be held at the Farmington Y at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Sept. 27.

Since leaving Indian Guides, I have had a daughter. Maybe it's time for me to put on that headdress and join a new Indian program.

Going back to the east side: a strange land

MOTHER HAD business on the Detroit's east side, where we used to live. I volunteered to take her. I thought it might be interesting to tour the old neighborhood, see the old house. I hadn't been by that way in many years.

We drove down the freeway and talked about some of the people who lived in the neighborhood, where they all had gone. No one lives there anymore, mother said. She knew a couple who lived on the next street over from her old house. "They stay in the house all the time and keep the doors locked, even in the summer," she said. "Their house has been broken into three times."

I got off at Chalmers and made a left at Harper — the old main street of my community. I remembered it as a once-thriving shopping area with people walking up and down the street, going into stores, the paper boy hawking the latest edition on the corner. Mom walked my sister and me with her as she made stops at the baker, the butcher, the grocery store.

THERE'S THE old dime store where my crime career was cut short. I stole a skate key on a dare and was pinched by the store manager. Brought home by the cops, as sad and rueful a 10-year-old as you can imagine. Never again, I vowed. The store is now boarded up.

There's where old John's confectionary used to be. Every Saturday a neighbor boy and I went up to buy a chocolate malted and listen to old John dispense grandfatherly advice. The store sells burglar alarms now. No more butchers, bakers, dime stores, clothing stores, confectionaries in this neighborhood that was a different age.

Now there are party stores, bars, beauty shops, magic shops, adult books stores, stores that sell betting books. Half the buildings are boarded up. A



Bob Wisler

couple have signs that say "Open," but there is nothing inside.

Turn right, down a few blocks and there's my old street — the neighborhood. Went to elementary school a few blocks down, high school a mile away. All of my early friends lived within a few blocks. We were at each others' houses daily. The houses are the same; I recognize each and every one. Except, for the most part, they're beat up or run down and no one I know lives there anymore.

There's Georgie's house — boarded up. "They couldn't sell it," mother said. There's Dayke's house — boarded up. Couldn't sell, mother said.

MANY OF the houses look ravaged. A door missing here, a window there. There are yards where the grass is two months long and the bushes overgrown and, yet, there are also many neat trim, recently painted houses and well-tended lawns that people maintain despite the deterioration around them.

Ah. There's the old house. Funny, everything looks smaller. Was the lawn that tiny, the porch that small? The garage is sagging, but not too bad. New door on the house. Looks triple strength. "There's the dope house," mother said pointing to a house across the street.

Mother moved from the neighborhood six years ago. She was mugged at the grocery store on a Sunday morning after church and decided she wanted to move. "I'm glad I don't live here anymore," mother said. "Me too," I said.

I don't know what I expected, but I thought it would be more nostalgic, that I might yearn for the past, that maybe I would see someone I knew walking down Harper and I could honk and wave, stop the car, jabber about old times.

Maybe this is the way it always is with American cities which grow old. I don't know. I only feel that I am no longer a part of it. I was a visitor to a place I once felt a fondness for, but now it seems like an alien land.

A baseball scribe's life: monotony, but still fair play

"YOU ARE just the fellow I was hoping to see. I'd like to ask a big favor of you."

This was the greeting from Dennis, a tailor friend of long standing and the type of friend for whom you would gladly do a favor.

"I have become a real baseball fan," he said in way of explanation, "and with you being an old-time baseball writer, I'd like to join you in the press box. I'd like to see how you fellows work — right there in the midst of all the excitement."

The Stroller just smiled. There are many baseball fans who have asked the same question through the years.

They would find it far from exciting if ever they were allowed to pay the visit to that glass-enclosed perch high on the roof of the old ballpark.

THE STROLLER HATED to tell his friend Dennis that such a visit was not possible. He explained that the press box was controlled by the

Baseball Writers Association of America, and only members were allowed space during the activity.

Dennis seemed a bit disappointed — just like all the rest. But this was due to the misconception of the work writers do once the umpire shouts, "Play ball!"

Contrary to many beliefs, there is little excitement in the press box. The writers are too busy keeping their own score and watching every move that may be important.

This may come as a real surprise, but the baseball writer leads a rather monotonous life.

He is perched up in the box while the game is going on and sees the same faces every day for the greater part of the year. There is little chance to make contacts that are so important to any writer.

ON THE ROAD, contrary to many beliefs, the trips are monotonous for the most part. There is a reason: After watching the players on the field, one



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

doesn't want to be with them during the evenings in a city anywhere from the Atlantic to the Pacific. So in New York, for instance, you roam almost as a "loner."

It is even worse now that so many games are played at night. When the Tigers are at home, the game usually ends shortly after 11 p.m. This is just a short time before the last edition of the morning paper goes to press. A writer has little chance to tell more than the straight facts — and in a hurry.

There is another side to this business of baseball writing. The most ardent readers are the players. They read every word, eager to learn just what you have written about them.

When Mickey Cochrane was the Tiger manager, he had one of his coaches read the papers, then cut out the items from the columns and paste them on the locker door of the player who was written about.

MANY TIMES, if you are critical of a player, he becomes irritated — often mad. So you have lost him for a while.

On the other hand, if you mention a player often, you are accused of favoritism.

You just can't win. No, Dennis, you have the wrong conception of the press box. Like many of us through the years, the "job" has lost its thrill. It isn't all peaches and cream.