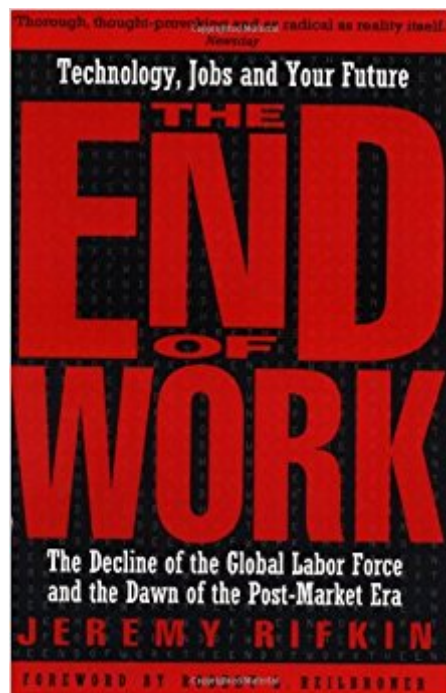




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The End Of Work: The Decline Of The Global Labor Force And The Dawn Of The Post-Market Era



Synopsis

An analysis of the potentially catastrophic implications of the growing worldwide unemployment crisis explains how we can avoid economic collapse, create conditions for a new more humane social order, and redefine the role of the individual in the new society. Reprint.

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Customer Reviews

In this challenging report, social activist Rifkin (Biosphere Politics) contends that worldwide unemployment will increase as new computer-based and communications technologies eliminate tens of millions of jobs in the manufacturing, agricultural and service sectors. He traces the devastating impact of automation on blue-collar, retail and wholesale employees, with a chapter devoted to African Americans. While a small elite of corporate managers and knowledge workers reap the benefits of the high-tech global economy, the middle class continues to shrink and the workplace becomes ever more stressful, according to Rifkin. As the market economy and public sector decline, he foresees the growth of a "third sector"-voluntary and community-based service organizations-that will create new jobs with government support to rebuild decaying neighborhoods and provide social services. To finance this enterprise, he advocates scaling down the military budget, enacting a value-added tax on nonessential goods and services and redirecting federal and state funds to provide a "social wage" in lieu of welfare payments to third-sector workers. 50,000 first printing; author tour. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Global unemployment is now at its highest levels since the Great Depression. Rifkin (Biosphere Politics, LJ 5/15/91) argues that the Information Age is the third great Industrial Revolution. A consequence of these technological advances is the rapid decline in employment and purchasing power that could lead to a worldwide economic collapse. Rifkin foresees two possible outcomes: a near workerless world in which people are free, for the first time in history, to pursue a utopian life of leisure; or a world in which unemployment leads to an even further polarization of the economic classes and a decline in living conditions for millions of people. Rifkin presents a highly detailed analysis of the technological developments that have led to the current situation, as well as intriguing, yet alarming, theories of what is to come. Highly recommended for both general and business collections. Gary W. White, Pennsylvania State Univ., Harrisburg Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a great book... Really lays out the solutions to some hard hitting problems of our day... Finally a book that looks at the real issues at hand from a logical... and dare I say it... scientific approach... to why things are the way they are and how we got here... This is a must read for anyone wondering why they can't find work in their field after having put in so much work to get the proper credentials and degrees to accomplish their chosen path... This book really gets your mind thinking outside the box that we have been programmed into believing... Leads you down a new path of seeing the world for the way it really is... and hopefully takes you in new directions that helps you jump the hurdles that have been placed in your way to achieving your goals... In any endeavor you must first understand the problem... this book is a study in what the problem is...

The author wrote this book years ago, based on the insight that corporations are replacing labor with computer software, robots and fear imposed to drive more productivity. Those ugly forces are still very much at work. However, the author has subsequently written The Third Industrial Revolution, which shows how we can shift from fossil fuels to renewables and create more work by creating an abundance of energy.

Must Read

"We are entering a new age of global markets and automated production. The road to a near-workerless economy is within sight. Whether that road leads to a safe haven or a terrible abyss will depend on how well civilization prepares for the post-market era that will follow on the heels of

the Third Industrial Revolution. The end of work could spell a death sentence for civilization as we have come to know it. The end of work could also signal the beginning of a great social transformation, a rebirth of the human spirit. The future lies in our hands." Thus ends the book, leaving no neat little answers - negative OR positive, but urging us to open our eyes and look around us. I'd seen him on C-span and promptly ordered his book through . This was when it first came out in hardcover and my oldest son, assured of a future work using skills from his newly obtained Masters in Computer Science, was concerned I was reading such a book. "Isn't he one of those Luddites?" I think of myself as a wanna be Luddite, but I saw no signs of this in the book. Instead, Rifkin seems to be concerned with the coming affects of the Informational Revolution. The book begins with a history of the Industrial Revolution. He gives us a nice tour of the birth of materialism as a concept created and promoted by economists and businessmen. "The term 'consumption,' he tells us, "has both English and French roots. In its original form, to consume meant to destroy, to pillage, to subdue, to exhaust. It is a word steeped in violence and until the present century had only negative connotations." The chapter, "Technology and the Afro-American Experience," addresses the effects of slavery, the supposed freedom of sharecropping, the loss of jobs as a consequence of the invention of the mechanical cotton picker, the rush to the cities and the subsequent loss of jobs as technology slowly progressed. There is a correlation to the success of whichever modern day technology we are experiencing, and the situation in the inner-cities. "Today, millions of African-Americans find themselves hopelessly trapped in a permanent underclass. Unskilled and unneeded, the commodity value of their labor has been rendered virtually useless by the automated technologies that have come to displace them in the new high-tech global economy." One chapter is entitled "No More Farmers" and discusses the advances of robotizing replacing tasks such as harvesting and livestock management, as well as the end of outdoor agriculture. Other chapters deal with the future for retail, service, blue collar jobs, the declining middle class and the growing chasm between the haves and the have-nots. In the chapter titled, "A More Dangerous World," he cites the Merva and Fowles study, saying that it "showed a striking correlation between growing wage inequality and increased criminal activity." "Rising unemployment and loss of hope for a better future are among the reasons that tens of thousands of young teenagers are turning to a life of crime and violence." He does point out that the explosion of the Third Revolution is going to make the social wounds we've tried to heal seem like paper cuts, but does not claim that we should unhook our computers and resist the revolutionary explosion. His suggestion is that we work on 'empowering' the Third Sector' - the independent sector - and turn back to community, to helping each other before it is too late. " A new generation might transcend

the narrow limits of nationalism and begin to think and act as common members of the human race, with shared commitments to each other, the community, and the larger biosphere." He does offer that since hi-tech advances may mean fewer jobs in the market economy, the only way to make sure those whose jobs are lost will be compensated is to have the government supply compensation. Naturally, this gives a flash-back to the welfare system, which I think has freaked out a few reviewers, paralyzing them into a sort of retro response. But Rifkin isn't just talking about the recipients of old - those stereotypical lower-income, under-educated inner city folks, he's talking about many more people. In my family, my middle son is a hands on kind of worker who in the past might have been a farmer. No matter how much education he gets, he isn't one of those who will sit well in the new techno age, and already he's feeling the pressures. The high paying jobs for him are life-threatening, so the kind of work he's hired for is low paying, not enough to support himself, let alone the family he has decided he can't afford to start. Rifkin isn't doing retro work - he suggests tying the subsidized income to service in the community, which he suggests might help the "growth and development of the social economy and facilitate the long-term transition into a community-centered, service-oriented culture." His answers are not clearly spelled out - he offers suggestions and insight into where we might be going as a race (the human race). The truth is, we all need to ask some questions and help find the answers. For those whose minds are set firmly in any direction, you'll get from this book very little - for those with open minds, regardless of your political view of the world, you may find this to be a door to the future.

I am convinced that the future Rifkin describes is real. Some of his solutions are credible, some are not. There's an obvious hole in his argument for the "Third Sector." He assumes that money diverted to the Third Sector will result in employment, but what if these organizations embrace technology just as industry has? That is already occurring and will continue to occur. If the only solution is for the government to become the employer for 90% of the population, we are all in trouble. The only reasonable approach that I can think of is for the government to become a clearing house for mandatory donations by corporations and the wealthy. That would put the power for determining worthy activity in the hands of many, instead of in the hands of government. We could and should be doing this right now. Instead of taxing corporations and the wealthy, the government should require donations to tax-exempt entities and individuals with low incomes. This would insure a "freer" society and would breed harmony between haves and have-nots. It would also prevent the government from spending \$1T a year on Big Brother and the Warfare State, which benefits no one but those employed by the military-industrial complex. Will the government willingly give up the

power of the purse? Only if people demanded it.

This book is a must read for all who want to understand the current employment situation, how it got this way and; how it will continue to progress. Jeremy Rifkin has done excellent research and presents a very factual account of employment history and trends as well as solutions. His suggestions are being implemented. I have thoroughly enjoyed this book. Great read. I highly recommend it.

Nice

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