

OPINION: THE ROBOTS ARE COMING

By Ron Munden -- ron@easttexasexposed.com -- October 22,2018



Today there is lots of talk about 7000 immigrants from Central America walking through Mexico and headed to the U.S. border. People are afraid these people are coming to take our jobs. Fortunately, the President has promised to protect our jobs from these invaders.

I am confident that this nation will get through this event and it will have no significant impact on the citizens of this country.

These are not the invaders that concern me. The invaders that concern me will be coming by the millions and will have a major impact on American jobs. They will change society from what we have today.

The invaders that concerns me are ROBOTS. I fear that we are a nation that is not preparing for impact of the robot invasion.

For 20 years or so engineers and scientists working on artificial intelligence seemed to have been stuck and there was little progress being made. That has all changed in the last 5 years. AI is on the move again. Cheap sensors and other hardware are now available and computer power continues to increase at the rate predicted by Moore's law. There is now the merging of these technologies and powerful but cheap robots are increasingly available. Over the next few years, millions of the robots will be entering the workplace in the United States. The same will be happening in other countries throughout the world. Millions of jobs will be lost to robots. Yes, there will be some new jobs created but for every job created hundreds of old jobs will be lost.

Foxconn is a company that makes iPhones for Apple in China. Last year Foxconn eliminated 60,000 positions and replaced these people with robots.

The President announced that Foxconn was going to build a new factory in the United States. Yes, this is good but don't expect it to produce tens of thousands of factory jobs. It may produce a couple of thousand new jobs but most of them will be computer related jobs. The factory worker is going to quickly become extinct.

Job losses will not be limited to factory floor jobs. Many office functions can be accomplished by robots and computers, so the clerical field will shrink. Truck drivers will also go on the chopping block. The autonomous cars are just a few years away, but I predict that autonomous long-haul trucks will be on the road even quicker. The technology is simpler, and the cost savings are huge. All of this will happen because there are strong economic incentives. If a business owner hopes to stay in business, they will have to go to robots to remain cost competitive.

When this happens there will be a world where there are much fewer jobs than there are people to fill those jobs and the world will face a paradigm shift. Unfortunately, I see no indication that the United States has begun planning for this change. What do you do with a massive number of people that do not have jobs? While the United States appears to be doing nothing, other countries have begun planning.

Last month China announced its intent to transition to a 32-hour work week. Their intent is to complete the transition in less than 10 years.

Change is imminent. If you think 7000 immigrants is the biggest problem we face, I think you are mistaken. More robots and fewer jobs will impact orders of magnitude more people than the immigrant problem. The sooner the government recognizes this the better off the American worker will be.