

Jobs, Precious Jobs!

By WILLIAM BUCHANAN

Despite high unemployment, the Senate and the House Democrats support doubling immigration and providing a pathway to citizenship for 11 to 20 million U.S. residents for whom the “rule of law” is merely an obstacle. They push legal and illegal immigration like there’s an unfulfilled need, a shortage of workers. But jobs are scarce — and may disappear!

Hey, diddle diddle

Let’s begin by stating the obvious: the real purpose of immigration is to diddle with the labor market on behalf of employers. Want proof? Throughout the Great Recession and indolent recovery, and in callous disregard for American workers, legal immigration has remained in excess of one million per year and non-immigrant workers are admitted as per usual. Alien workers, and the employers who hire them, are protected by inflexible laws while American workers have to deal with the labor market.

Fiscal Year	Legal Immigrants (green cards) ¹
2008	1,107,126
2009	1,130,818
2010	1,042,025
2011	1,052,040
2012	1,031,631

Offshoring

IBM, according to a recent report,² now employs more workers in India than in the U.S., pays them \$17,000 per year, and, no doubt, dangles a possible “L” visa before their eyes. But offshoring is old sombrero. The American job market has been in decline for 40 years.

The labor participation rate, which peaked at 67.3 in 2000, has gradually declined to 63.2, a level not seen since Jimmy Carter was in the White House. A report in the *New York Times*³ claims men’s median wage has dropped 19 percent since 1970. Women’s median

wage stalled in 2000 and has since declined by 6 percent. Government statistics show wages decline significantly over time for workers with less than a bachelor’s degree. Lower taxes and less regulation won’t solve this; nor will more consumer credit and deficit spending — we’ve run out of tricks.

Automation

Jeremy Rifkin coined the expression: “The End of Work” with his 1996 book of the same name.⁴ In it he spoke of a “Jobless Recovery.” A subtitle of his 2004 update, however, predicted: “The *Permanent* Jobless Recovery.” This was 2004. He was no longer talking about a Jobless Recovery, but a permanent one! The topic has absorbed us since 2009. But permanent?

We’re taught that each time technology tossed workers to the street, technology and cheaper goods would create new, more, and higher-paying jobs. Jobs expanded from agriculture to manufacturing to service. But now information and communication technologies and “smart” machines invade all these occupations. In the global economy no business can rest on its laurels. Obsolescence impends; advance or fall back.

The precipitous decline in union membership diagrams the process. The power to withhold services used to be unions’ stock-in-trade. When was the last time a union called a major strike? Clearly employees are losing ground to employers. Moreover, skills get used up. Gone is the gold watch ceremony at the end of 45 years of doing the same job. Going back to school to learn a new skill or craft is the impermanent worker’s permanent task. I think it’s not for everyone.

There will continue to be jobs for CEOs, some lawyers, and craft workers like plumbers, roofers, and carpenters. Non-profits may take up some of the slack. The arts and organized crime are not going away. Uh oh! The final frontier?

Robotics

*The Economist*⁵ reported recently on how Japan is solving its shortage of nurses by employing robots to feed and walk the infirm. Reminiscent of Sigourney Weaver in “Alien,” lifting gear allows Japanese nurses to lift patients using robotic body attachments. *The Economist*, ever clueless, blamed the nurse shortage on Japan’s

William Buchanan is legislative director of the American Council for Immigration Reform (ANCIR), based in Washington, D.C.

miserly immigration quotas. Recommended reading: The McKinsey Global Institute⁶ details 12 what it calls “disruptive technologies” whose world-wide worth will grow from \$14 trillion to \$35 trillion by 2025.

In *Robot Futures*,⁷ Illah Reza Nourbakhsh’s almost whimsical look at the future, nano technology, “the cloud,” artificial intelligence, and robots (bots), some of them looking quite human, complete the conquest of work — and a lot more. I don’t want to go into detail about what is a flashing beam on the unknowable, but “you can’t stop progress,” as we used to say.

Jobs, precious jobs

It has always been assumed that work was an essential part of life. People measure their self-worth based on their ability to do their fair share. A growing population faced with a declining job market will present social dilemmas never before encountered. Moreover, we will need to resolve the question: how does an unemployed population buy the wonderful products made by robots?

Every job is precious. Every job forestalls the day of reckoning and gives us precious time to adjust. Immigration is something we just can’t afford. ■

Endnotes

1. United States. Department of Homeland Security. Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012.

2. John Aidan Byrne, *New York Post*, “IBM now employs more workers in India than US”, October 5, 2013. <http://nypost.com/2013/10/05/ibm-now-employs-more-workers-in-india-than-us/>

3. Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney, “The Uncomfortable Truth About American Wages,” *The New York Times*, Tuesday, October 8, 2013. Greenstone and Looney are, respectively, director and policy director of Brookings’ Hamilton Project “Closing the Jobs Gap.” They blame the declines on “a variety of factors, including technological change, international trade and the decline of unions.” Brookings! Clueless!

4. Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work, The decline of the global workforce and the dawn of the post-market era*, Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, New York, 1996.

5. N.V., “Difference Engine: The caring robot,” *The Economist*, May 14, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2013/05/automation-elderly>

6. James Manyika and five others, *Disruptive technologies: Advances that will transform life, business, and the global economy*, McKinsey Global Institute, Chicago, 2013, 176 pages.

7. Illah Reza Nourbakhsh, *Robot Futures*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2013.

Tyson Foods: Their ‘Undocumented-Worker’ Problems

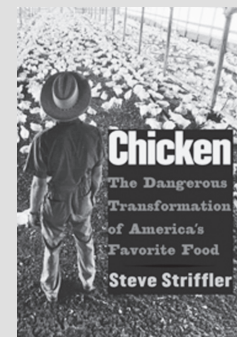
At one end of the economy, companies lobby Congress for more ‘temporary’ employment visas to hold down salaries for professionals in STEM fields. At the other end of the spectrum, companies drive down the wages of the working poor, forcing them to seek taxpayer-provided ‘public benefits.’ As Garrett Hardin noted, it is all about private gain while socializing costs.

In his book, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America’s Favorite Food* (Yale University Press, 2007), author Steve Striffler presents a harsh indictment of the poultry giants who dominate the industrial meat processing system. He discusses the indictment and trial of three Tyson Food executives for hiring illegal Hispanic workers over a period of time when U.S. chicken exports ballooned from 500,000 metric tons in 1990 to over 2,500,000 tons in 2000, with China and Russia becoming the two main consumers of U.S.-processed chicken.

From North Carolina to Arkansas, black and white workers were replaced by Hispanics in the rural towns where meat processing plants are located.

A manager of the Tyson plant in Shelbyville, Tennessee, paid Amador Anchondo-Rascon (a previously deported illegal who later married an American citizen and received legal residency) up to \$200 per head as a ‘recruitment fee’ for 2,000 workers (Guatemalans for the most part) which Tyson needed.

Eventually the INS, in collaboration with other federal agencies and local police forces, obtained a 36-count indictment against Tyson Foods, two current company executives, and four former managers. The U.S. Justice Department claimed that 15 Tyson plants in nine states conspired since 1994 to recruit illegal aliens. Tyson denied any wrongdoing and claimed that the managers in question were ‘rogue employees.’ ■



—Wayne Lutton