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"The History of Work" by Frank Ackerman

Work is unseen and almost unchanging. It is best thought of as a well-defined unpleasantness or disutility, which people engage in solely in order to obtain the income needed for private consumption -- the real goal of economic activity. Over time, thanks to productivity increases, the same amount of disutility at work leads to more consumption, which is the definition of progress.

Or so one could easily conclude from the simplest and most widely circulated versions of conventional economics. The simplistic analysis of work is often what is learned by those students whose exposure to economics is limited to an introductory course, or those citizens who listen to the increasingly passionate public discussion of the efficiency of the market -- in short, by almost everyone who encounters economic theory.

Labor economists, of course, have always known better. In contrast to some other areas of economics, there is a lively ongoing debate about alternative theories in labor economics, integrated with impressively detailed empirical research on many questions about employment and wages. To a far greater extent than in any of our previous volumes, our review of the frontiers of economic thought on the nature of work draws on articles from the established academic journals in the field.

Yet there is still a need to explore and expand the frontiers of economics in this area. The conventional constraints of neoclassical theory sometimes threaten to stifle, or at least obscure, the innovative approaches appearing in labor economics. Moreover, even the new research by labor economists often reduces the work process to a matter of individual maximizing behavior over a narrow set of quantifiable choices, leaving little scope for the analysis of social interaction, institutional contexts or historical change.

Three concerns, three often-overlooked issues, motivate our investigation, and our selection of topics and articles in this book. First, work as an essential human activity and economic process encompasses much more than paid employment. Second, work is a social process that shapes and is shaped by workers' actions and beliefs, not just a question of individual employment decisions and wages. Finally, as our title suggests, institutional, technological, and political forces are changing the nature of work, in ways that may require corresponding changes in our

theories. This essay offers a brief look at the latter subject, the history of work, and then introduces the subjects of the more detailed discussions that occupy the rest of this book.

IN THE BEGINNING

Until the last 200 years or so, work, for the vast majority of people in every society, meant agricultural and related household labor. Agriculture of course remains an essential activity, and still accounts for a large part of the work done in much of the world. However, it accounts for only a very small fraction of work in developed countries today, and is shrinking in other countries as they develop. For brevity and clarity of focus, the discussion in this essay, and in the volume as a whole, largely omits the special problems of work on the farm.

Even farther back in time is the intriguing possibility of a preagricultural life that has been described as “Stone Age affluence.”¹ Throughout the long prehistory of human existence, prior to the appearance of agriculture roughly 10,000 years ago, people lived by hunting and gathering. Hunter-gatherer communities, with low population densities and minimal material possessions, seem to have allowed easier work lives and a more sociable existence than any society that has followed them. But such a relaxed way of life is entirely disconnected from the modern world of work.

For a feasible, short version of the history of work, we will focus largely on the post-agricultural, Anglo-American experience -- both because this was the first and best-researched case, and because it has had such a powerful effect (sometimes through voluntary emulation, sometimes through forcible imposition) in shaping the later experience of other countries. We begin with a look at preindustrial patterns of work, then turn to a three-stage classification of modes of work since industrialization, and finally consider in greater detail the puzzling nature of the latest developments.

PREINDUSTRIAL WORK

In the century before the Industrial Revolution there were many different kinds of work, and of workers. Even in England, agriculture still employed a majority of the population, increasingly including wage laborers as well as those who owned their own land. Perhaps next most common was rural household industry, particularly spinning and weaving; some were self-employed, while many worked for merchants via the “putting-out” system. In the towns, artisans worked in many skilled trades, either individually or in very small enterprises. The only important city, metropolitan London (which had a population of more than half a million by 1700), employed many men in work crews on the docks and in the building trades. Many women and some men were shopkeepers, street vendors, and domestic servants. Large enterprises were the exception rather than the rule, but could be found in mining and in scattered other industries. Thousands of sailors worked on England’s merchant ships, and in the navy.

Some of these workers were insecure and destitute; many lived relatively comfortable lives -- in comparison both to their contemporaries in continental Europe, and to their descendants in the

first half of the nineteenth century. It might appear that the different types of preindustrial workers had little in common, except that the industrial proletariat was later recruited from among their ranks. Yet E.P. Thompson² argued that many of the forms of pre-industrial work shared a task-oriented rhythm, quite unlike the regular, disciplined time orientation of industry or bureaucracy. The rhythms of nature dictated the schedule for many types of work: farmers had to plant and harvest according to the seasons, while fishermen had to “attend to the tides,” and sailed, night or day, when the seas permitted. Work on the docks and in construction was governed by the tides and the weather, even more than it is today. (Those who cared for children, Thompson noted, had to attend to the tides of infancy, as they largely still do today.) The rhythm of work governed by nature leads to an uneven alternation between exhaustingly long, hard days and more relaxed interludes.

Other types of pre-industrial work also followed varying rhythms of task-oriented exertion followed by periods of near-idleness. Artisans frequently worked day and night as the end of the week approached, then observed the “feast of Saint Monday” (the widely used metaphor for absenteeism) as the next week began. This ritual, on occasion extended to honor Saint Tuesday as well, existed in a context of traditional fairs and holidays that made work time quite variable throughout the year. Employers naturally sought to stamp out such interruptions in work, as did temperance groups; Saint Monday’s celebrations were far from dry. But despite growing labor discipline, traces of the old artisan rhythms could be found in rural and small-town England into the twentieth century, with a few coopers reportedly still honoring Saint Monday in the traditional manner as late as the 1960s.

Such a task-oriented rhythm, with bouts of very hard work interspersed with frequent relaxation and celebration, is incompatible with the efficiency of the market, in theory and in practice. The market is efficient because increased demand for anything leads to higher prices, resulting in increased supply. Yet for the pre-industrial artisans described by Thompson, higher hourly wages might result in less work and more frequent celebration of Saint Tuesday. This is the backward-bending supply curve of labor, often exhibited as a classroom curiosity but excluded by assumption from the main body of economic theory.

To make markets work, and indeed to make capitalism profitable and expandable, the labor supply curve had to be bent forward. In order to make people work more rather than less when wages went up, a combination of strict workplace discipline and acquisitive consumerism was required -- and was created over the course of the first century of industrialization. This process occurred earlier in England than elsewhere; according to Thompson,

By the 1830s and 1840s it was commonly observed that the English industrial worker was marked off from his fellow Irish worker, not by a greater capacity for hard work, but by his regularity, his methodical paying-out of energy, and perhaps also by a repression, not of enjoyments, but of the capacity to relax in the old, uninhibited ways.³

WORK DISCIPLINE AND TECHNOLOGY

A useful framework for understanding the history of work since the Industrial Revolution is suggested by David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich.⁴ They identify three logical stages, which are chronologically somewhat overlapping. The first stage, *proletarianization*, moved increasing numbers of people into wage labor in large enterprises, but often continued to rely on old crafts and technical skills. This stage lasted from the beginnings of industrialization - the 1780s in England, the 1820s in the U.S. -- through the 1890s.

In the second stage, *homogenization*, employers challenged and often eliminated the power of the skilled craft workers. This allowed the introduction of assembly lines, continuous process technologies and other innovations. It also allowed employers to compel the increasingly homogeneous work force to work harder than ever. The second stage, occurring at different times in different industries, stretched from the 1870s through the beginning of World War II.

The third stage, *segmentation*, saw the rise of industrial unionism and the adoption of more moderate, enlightened industrial management, followed by the decline in industrial employment (first in relative terms, later in absolute terms as well) and increasing segmentation of the labor force. This stage began in the 1920s, and, according to Gordon, Edwards and Reich, extended at least into the 1980s, the time when they wrote about it.

What happened in the beginning? Industrialization occurred first in textiles, not only in Britain but also in the United States. Before about 1840, according to economic historian Alfred Chandler, textile mills were virtually the only large industrial enterprises in America.⁵ They were unique in labor discipline as well as in size:

The work was far more routine than even that of plantation slaves. Indeed, the [textile] mill workers were the first sizable group of Americans to be totally isolated from seasonal variations in the tempo of their work.⁶

This familiar portrait of labor at the dawn of industrialization involves women and children working at massive new machines. Not only were women and children cheaper to hire than adult men; employers believed that they would form a more docile, manageable work force, avoiding the self-confident independence of male artisans and other workers. Yet the story of the textile industry, important as it is in its own right, may be atypical of other nineteenth-century developments in two respects.

First, early factories did not always involve new production technologies. Large enterprises emerged in many U.S. industries in the late nineteenth century, made possible by advances in transportation and communications (particularly the spread of the railroads), the availability of cheap energy (coal), the growth of management expertise, and other factors. In some industries such as papermaking, revolutionary new production processes appeared at about the same time. The technique for making paper from wood, rather than from cloth rags, was introduced in America in the 1860s, transforming and expanding the industry. But in other important industries, such as iron and steel, the new factories initially brought existing crafts and processes together under one roof. In nineteenth-century steel mills, each skilled craft carefully guarded its

technical secrets. Some craft workers functioned virtually as subcontractors, hiring their own helpers and contracting to deliver a certain amount of production. In such cases, early industrialization changed the place and pace of work, but left the techniques of production unchanged.

Second, the industrial labor force did not remain predominantly women and children; skilled and unskilled adult men were drawn in as well.⁷ The 1890 Census, the first one to provide detailed information on workers' occupations, found that 79 percent of industrial workers were adult men. At the end of the nineteenth century, about one-fourth of all women who worked for wages were in manufacturing; a larger number were domestic servants, and almost as many were farm laborers. (In this era, paid work was extremely rare for married women -- most of whom, of course, performed domestic and/or farm labor without pay.)⁸

Changes in production processes were the focus of struggles in the workplace; the results were far from being predetermined or deducible from macroeconomic contexts. Chris Tilly and Charles Tilly, examining the history of nineteenth-century English and American industries, find that both textiles and coal mining offered a choice between more capital-intensive processes that required less skilled labor, and less capital-intensive processes that depended more heavily on skilled workers.⁹ However, neither country had a consistent comparative advantage in capital or skilled labor: the more capital-intensive approach was adopted in England in coal mining, but in the U.S. in textiles. Modernization did not proceed uniformly throughout the economy; the newest industries often remained dependent on, and intertwined with, the oldest modes of production. The crucial raw material of early industrialization, cotton, was produced by slave labor until the 1860s, and often by semi-feudal sharecroppers for the rest of the century.

FACTORIES AND FAMILIES

In the next broad stage of industrialization ("homogenization", as identified by Gordon et al.), employers challenged the power of skilled workers, defeating the small craft-based unions that had emerged in steel and other industries. The expanded scope of capitalist control over the production process allowed the reorganization of work and the introduction of assembly lines, continuous process technologies, and other innovations. The power and the wages of skilled workers could thereby be reduced; workers were increasingly pushed to the limits of their endurance, in what contemporary observers called the "drive system." In the early twentieth century new waves of immigration to the U.S., and internal migration of African-Americans from Southern farms to industrial cities, provided a rapidly growing labor force.

Meanwhile, the growth of commerce, and of corporate hierarchies, spawned a growing middle class, and the spreading patterns of conspicuous consumption which Thorstein Veblen so effectively satirized. The Victorian ideal of domesticity spread to all those who could afford it; the images of the home as refuge from work, and the wife as homemaker and consumer, became important parts of the cultural landscape.

Indeed, the modern concept of the “housewife” was essentially created in this era. In earlier times, although there were clearly differentiated gender roles, there was little doubt that men and women were both involved in production. No one would have described the wife in a household of European peasants, or American pioneers, as primarily a consumer. In mid-nineteenth century America, households still carried out a vast range of productive activities: growing and preparing food; sewing and mending clothes, and reusing fabric scraps in quilts, rugs, and homemade upholstery; making and repairing furniture, tools, and other household goods; even making candles and soap from household wastes.¹⁰

The expansion of consumer goods industries toward the end of the nineteenth century began to change all this, providing affordable mass-produced substitutes for many things that had formerly been made at home. This industrial change allowed, and perhaps required, the rise of a consumer society.¹¹ In the new regime, the work of the housewife shifted away from material production, toward consumption of marketed goods combined with caring for, or “nurturing,” other family members. The change was a contradictory one, at once liberating women from exhausting toil, and commercializing daily life to an ever-expanding extent.

The industrial development of the same era also had contradictory results: it delivered some material rewards -- by 1929, a majority of American households owned cars -- but it required oppressive, exhausting labor, and increasingly eliminated the security and privileges of skilled workers. The combination of the 1930s Depression and World War II ushered in the next phase, based on widespread unionization, more cooperative labor relations (at least in the more profitable major corporations), and the social and labor legislation of the New Deal. Gordon et al. identify these features as the basis of the third stage of industry, “segmentation” of the labor force.

THREE THEORIES: STUCK IN THE PAST?

All of the traditional theories of labor economics -- neoclassical, Marxist, and institutionalist -- seem designed to describe the nature of work in the early or mid-twentieth century. The destruction of traditional skilled crafts and homogenization of industrial labor could be seen as consistent with the neoclassical image of an abstract market: nothing matters, as a first approximation, except the quantity of labor to be bought and sold, and the wage rate that is offered or demanded. The same reality, seen in broader social and political terms, could be taken as confirmation of Marxist predictions about the evolution of capitalism and the role of labor within that system. And the subsequent rise of unions and less antagonistic labor relations led to the heyday of institutionalist economics, which described in detail the bargaining processes and other institutional regularities of the era.

All three theories have fared badly in the second half of the twentieth century -- which is why it is important to explore the new frontiers of labor economics. As labor markets have become segmented, differentiated, and increasingly unequal in outcomes, the neoclassical market paradigm has looked less and less appropriate. Extensions of the basic model, such as search theory and human capital theory, have led to selected insights, but are far from sufficient as a

comprehensive analysis of labor. Newer approaches such as efficiency wage and market segmentation theories allow economists to model some of the more complex behavior patterns that are observed in real-world labor markets, as we will see in Part 2. Yet the latest theories lead ever farther from the original market paradigm, still leave important questions unanswered, and to date have not produced a unified new account of the economics of labor. Other voices, also heard in Part 2, doubt that even the newest formal models are adequate for a theoretical understanding of work and labor markets.

Many aspects of work, through the “homogenization” phase of industrial labor, were described remarkably well by Marxist theory. Proletarianization, deskilling of workers, intensification of the pace of work, a decade-long depression in the 1930s, an upsurge in union activity -- all seemed consistent with the predictions made by Karl Marx in the nineteenth century. Few social scientists have looked so far and so successfully into the future. Yet after the 1930s, events in the U.S. bore a decreasing resemblance to the classical tenets of Marxism. Such trends as widespread apolitical unionization, the comparative affluence of large parts of the working class, the new segmentation and stratification of labor, and then the decline of industrial employment after the 1970s, all challenged the established theories of the left.

As with neoclassical economists, a number of creative neo-Marxists have sought to adapt and rescue their theory. Harry Braverman, for example, argued that proletarianization and deskilling will continue to expand in the future into higher and higher strata of the working population. Reality is more complex than that, however, with new skills rising at the same time that old ones decline; the contradictory changes in the levels of workplace skills are discussed in Part 4. There is not yet a successful, comprehensive neo-Marxist account of the economics of labor in the second half of the twentieth century.

Institutionalist economics has long excelled in describing the context and structures of unions, bargaining, and labor relations. At mid-century the labor movement looked like an established fact of economic life, and institutionalists looked similarly established in the world of labor economics. Through unionization, Galbraith suggested, workers achieved “countervailing power” vis-a-vis corporate America. Wage contours and other patterns of bargaining were better understood in institutional terms than with more abstract models. Neither the reality nor the theory was destined to endure: both the labor movement and the institutionalist approach to labor economics soon suffered precipitous declines. Neo-institutionalist analyses, attuned to the more difficult circumstances of labor at the end of the century, are only beginning to appear.¹²

In short, none of the existing theories offers an adequate description of recent developments in the world of work. This book is an attempt to answer the resulting questions: what has happened to work in the late twentieth century, and how can economics be expanded and enriched to understand the nature of work today?

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Work in America, in the middle of the century, existed within the institutional structure that emerged from the New Deal and the wartime economy of World War II: strong unions in many industries; labor legislation that tolerated and bureaucratized existing unions, while limiting their activism and growth; new styles of industrial relations in many major corporations; and social welfare systems that alleviated some of the worst forms of poverty. While there were important international similarities, the corresponding institutional framework for postwar reconstruction was somewhat different in other developed countries, notably being more favorable to unions and welfare state initiatives in most of Europe, while drawing on unique social and cultural norms in Japan.

For employers, this was a regime that imposed uncomfortably high labor costs. From the beginning of the postwar era, there were attempts to segment the labor market, limiting the proportion of work done under high-cost conditions. Skilled workers, and the production workers in the largest, most profitable firms, enjoyed the relatively high wages and job security of the “primary labor market”; but at the same time, they represented a declining fraction of the working population. Routine, low-skilled production and service work was increasingly done under the much less attractive conditions of the “secondary labor market.” Technological and organizational change led to an increasing proportion of white collar work, often done by female clerical workers, and almost always non-unionized.

The first quarter-century after World War II has been called the “golden age” of capitalism.¹³ (The term, it should be emphasized, refers solely to the macroeconomic performance of the era, not to the concurrent social, cultural, or political context.) Growth was rapid throughout the developed world; although the “good jobs” in the primary labor market were declining as a percentage of the labor force, they were still growing in absolute numbers. Wages and productivity were rising steadily from year to year. Among other social consequences for the U.S., this appeared to be a golden age for African-American workers, as increasing numbers moved from the rural South to urban, industrial areas. The public acceptance of civil rights and affirmative action suggested that a new era was beginning in race relations. Black-white income differentials were narrowing, many professions were taking first steps toward integration, and a classic pattern of upward mobility -- work hard all your life at a unionized factory job, and send your children to college -- seemed to be spreading across the color line.

And then, in the 1970s, it ended. Observers at the time might have picked the oil crises or the social turbulence surrounding the Vietnam war as the decisive turning points of the decade. In retrospect, it appears that a quieter economic reversal was taking place: productivity and real wages stagnated, manufacturing employment began to decline in absolute (not just relative) terms, income inequalities based on race, education, and other factors began to widen, and unions were visibly in retreat. The decline in employment and real wages has been most severe for men without college degrees, including, in the U.S., a disproportionate number of African-American men; this loss of employment has been plausibly blamed for many interwoven social problems of minority communities.¹⁴ The decline is significant for less educated whites, as well;

those of any race who lose formerly secure “good jobs” often fail to find new work with comparable wages or working conditions.

The underlying economic problem was not uniquely an American one, as a similar stagnation spread throughout Europe by the 1980s, and to Japan a decade later. There is, however, a difference in the consequences of stagnation: in most of Europe, stronger unions, labor legislation, and social welfare programs mean that workers who lose good jobs are more likely to remain unemployed, while in America, and increasingly in Britain, the unemployed are more often forced to take worse jobs. The merits of the two approaches can be debated: on the one hand, the European response appears to prolong stagnation; on the other hand, the Anglo-American response appears to stimulate increasingly unequal growth, with many people relegated to an inferior status. It is not clear which route leads more quickly to equitable growth, as neither has yet reached that goal.

A PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

Now that the macroeconomic golden age has passed into history, what are the forces shaping the nature of work in its more tarnished, contemporary condition? The subsequent parts of this volume address different aspects of this and related questions. New theories of labor economics, as described above, are the subject of Part 2. The articles presented there should prompt discussion on two different levels, concerning both the merits of specific new models and theories, and the adequacy of the conventional style of formal economic modeling.

Several parts of the book present different views that bear on the great debate about recent history: What caused the transformation of work in developed countries, including the decline of traditional industrial employment, starting in the 1970s? At least three culprits have been proposed: trade, technology, and changes in the political and institutional context. There is no need to view this as an either/or choice; the evidence suggests that all three have played important, interconnected roles. Yet the inevitably polarized debate may illuminate the underlying causal mechanisms. The different poles of the debate can be found throughout Parts 3 through 6, along with many related issues.

Trade suggests itself as a cause of recent changes in work because the era of decline in developed-country manufacturing has also been an era of cheap imports of clothing, electronics, and other goods. It is easy to see stagnation and industrial decline in the First World as a direct result of the beginnings of industrialization in the Third World. However, many economists have concluded that trade has only a minor influence on employment and wages. Counterarguments include the suggestions that trade with low-wage countries is too small to have massive effects on work; similar declines in low-skill employment and wages have been observed in industries that are sheltered from trade; and signs of the impending decline can be seen in the slowdown in productivity growth beginning in the late 1960s, well before effective competition from low-wage manufacturing countries began.¹⁵ In response, a few economists have argued that the impact of trade is much greater than conventional analyses would suggest, reshaping the industries that remain in developed countries as well as causing some to leave.

The articles in Part 3 include several views from each side of this debate, along with discussion of some of the varied effects of globalization on labor, and proposals for policy responses to the problems of trade.

A second possible cause of the transformation of work, changes in technology and work organization, is the subject of Part 4. Some analysts see technological change as deskilling and disempowering workers, if not replacing them altogether; others find the process to be more ambiguous or contestable in its implications for labor. Access to new technologies such as computers is strongly correlated with employment and wage gains within the workforce, but such empirical findings are subject to a variety of interpretations. Intensified competition has brought not only new technologies, but also new systems of organization to the workplace. Despite scattered experiments with very democratic, participatory work systems, major corporate employers have tended to adopt systems of tightly managed employee participation, inspired by Japanese management practices. As with new technologies, there are differences of opinion about the meaning of new work systems for the workers involved.

Along with the adoption of new technologies and management systems, corporations have sought to preserve flexibility in a rapidly changing marketplace by reducing the number of workers to whom they have long-term commitments. The result is that fewer people spend their work lives in the internal labor markets within large establishments, while more find themselves in some form of contingent or non-standard work. This is the topic of Part 5. In the U.S., about a third of female and a quarter of male workers are in job arrangements other than regular full-time work, such as temp agency jobs, self-employment, or part-time work. A minority of these non-standard workers, such as successful contractors and consultants, are doing better than full-time employees; most are doing worse. That is, the majority of non-standard workers are stuck in an inferior segment of the labor market, with low pay, minimal benefits, and little security. Most ominous is the tendency toward “informalization,” recreating patterns typical of much poorer countries or earlier periods of history: those who lack formal employment are pushed into activities such as scavenging, drug trafficking, or the new wave of sweatshops and industrial homework. These extremes, as well as the inequality between standard and non-standard jobs in general, highlight the need for creative policy responses.

The problems of inequity and insecurity in work today contain echoes of the historical motivation for the organization of unions. However, the labor movement has been declining for some time. This suggests the third major hypothesis about the transformation of work since the 1970s: could institutional and political changes, such as the weakening of unions, explain the problem? Part 6 examines the emerging patterns of industrial relations, both in unionized settings and in alternative institutional frameworks. Despite their weakened state, unions still make an important difference in labor market outcomes. International comparison shows that countries with stronger unions have less inequality; the lower half of the income distribution, in particular, gains from widespread unionization. An intriguing and unexpected finding is that new employee participation schemes appear to be much more productive in unionized workplaces. None of this changes the fact that current economic trends are unfavorable to

traditional unionism; revival of the labor movement may require bold new strategies emphasizing democratization and the public interest as well as the members' own well-being.

Other important approaches to worker representation include works councils, widely used in Germany and elsewhere in Europe to allow employee participation on issues not covered by union contracts. Works councils are attractive in theory but almost unknown in the United States -- a fate they share with another innovative idea, producer cooperatives. When workers own and manage the firms they work for, promising solutions are available for many problems of equity, participation, and motivation. The comparative handful of existing cooperatives, largely in Italy, France, and Spain, have been extensively studied. Their impressive combination of efficiency and participation should attract much more attention; some of the articles included here attempt to identify the barriers to the formation of cooperatives.

The stratification of employment, and the inequality of labor market opportunities and outcomes, has always occurred in part along gender and racial lines. Part 7 explores the problems of difference and diversity in the workplace today. Job niches are often stereotyped as appropriate for a particular race or gender; for example, jobs involving emotional empathy or nurturing are often thought to be women's work. As women move out of the home and into paid employment in industries around the world, their choices at work are often limited to those that reflect aspects of traditional female roles.

Racial minorities, long kept in inferior or subordinate occupations, benefitted from the combination of economic expansion and affirmative action in the 1960s and early 1970s; their availability as a supply of industrial workers was important to post-World War II economic growth. More recently, economic stagnation and the retreat from liberal activism have led to a worsening position for minorities. The perception that African-American men, in particular, lack the increasingly important relational and motivational "soft skills" is cited by employers as a reason for preferring other workers. Such a judgment, if it is not just another disguise for prejudice, suggests avenues for improving the skills and prospects of those at the bottom of the job market.

The decline of traditional industry was only part of the transformation of work in the post-World War II era. While employment of production workers in manufacturing was declining in relative terms throughout the period, other forms of employment were rising. Services such as education, health, and retail distribution were expanding, as was clerical and other nonproduction employment in industry itself. Many of these jobs were filled by women, whose participation in paid employment has risen steadily. The nuclear family held together by a stay-at-home mom lasted long enough to become a dominant cultural myth and television sitcom classic, but quickly declined as women increasingly worked for wages.

A crucial but less visible implication of these trends can be seen in Part 8. Traditionally, women's unpaid work played an essential social role in childrearing, nurturing family members, and providing "caring labor" in general. Yet that role rarely earned social standing or power within the family comparable to that of the male "breadwinner." As paid job opportunities attract ever-growing numbers of women, the caring labor formerly done by housewives is in danger of being left undone. A socially sustainable society must find a way to provide caring labor for the young, the old, and the sick, while ensuring equal access to paid employment.

Finally, the discussion of economic trends should not be allowed to obscure the importance of the human meaning of work. This is the subject of Part 9. Work is not just a disutility endured in order to earn the means of consumption; rather, it is an essential human activity that shapes our personalities, creates social connections, and contributes to self-esteem. Sociological research amply confirms the importance of work in these regards, as well as the corresponding personal damage that is often done by involuntary unemployment. Several theoretical traditions highlight the human implications of work, ranging from Marxists writing about alienated labor to the pioneers of modern management theory writing about worker motivation. Concern for the quality of work experience has become, at least in principle, an important part of new approaches to industrial relations; but there remains a tension in the discussion between the promise of utopian restructuring and the danger of manipulative personnel management. The nature of the work process, the varied motivations for work, and the potential for fundamental reorganization -- all these issues are raised by the changing nature of work at the end of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine and Atherton, 1972); a chapter is summarized in Goodwin, Ackerman, and Kiron, editors, *The Consumer Society*.
2. E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present*
3. *Ibid.*, 91.
4. David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
5. A survey of the ten leading industrial states in 1832 found that textile mills accounted for 88 of the 106 industrial enterprises with over \$100,000 in assets, and 31 of the 36 enterprises with more than 250 workers. Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 60.
6. *Ibid.*, 68.
7. The same may be happening today in the rapidly industrializing East Asian countries: the labor force is heavily female in the earliest stages of industry, but comes to include more male workers as skills and technologies become more complex.
8. Claudia Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), Chapter 3.
9. Chris Tilly and Charles Tilly, *Work Under Capitalism*, forthcoming 1998.
10. See Susan Strasser's forthcoming *Waste and Want: Disposal, Recycling, and American Consumer Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), and Frank Ackerman, *Why Do We Recycle? Markets, Values, and Public Policy* (Washington: Island Press, 1997), chapter 10.
11. See our earlier volume, Goodwin, Ackerman, and Kiron, *The Consumer Society*.
12. See, for example, Tilly and Tilly, *Work Under Capitalism*; a chapter of this book is summarized in Part 2.
13. Stephen A. Marglin and Juliet B. Schor, editors, *The Golden Age: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
14. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears*; a chapter of this book is summarized in Part 9.

15. The latter point is documented in detail in Andrew Glyn, Alan Hughes, Alain Lipietz, and Ajit Singh, “The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age,” in Marglin and Schor, *The Golden Age*. See also the work by David Gordon summarized in Part 3.