

Scary Halloween Issue 2014

TRENDEVENTS

If this issue of TrendEvents won't terrify you, what will? Scary robots, scary economics, scary nuclear waste, we have it all this issue! Also featured are numerous reviews of technology issues and developments with commentary by Ron Miller.

NEWS ALERT!

The OSHbot may be coming to a hardware store near you!



Figure 1: photo credit to Fellow Robots.

(Mountain View, CA) The Robot Overlords are on their way. Spooky, ghost-like robots will now be helping customers in OSH hardware stores. These will be the first somewhat “humanoid” robots that most people will personally encounter.

These OSHbots can move around, and even hold a conversation with you (at least about finding OSH hardware products). These are also apparently true, autonomous robots in that they are not human-operated by remote control. They can also speak multiple languages.

OSH claims that these robots will supplement current human workers, rather than replace them. This will allow human workers to focus on more specialized work.

It makes sense for robots to replace humans for tedious, menial or otherwise undesirable work. Yet, the real issue is who will own and control the robots? Will ownership be widely distributed among individuals or will the robots be owned by large corporations controlled by a tiny oligarchy?

Source: TrendEvents staff and [Lowes/OSH](#) website.

Continuing our theme of terror...

WHY THE ECONOMY IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE

(An exclusive article by the TrendEvents staff for its readers)

HOW WE ARRIVED HERE

As Technocracy has long pointed out, our *laissez-faire* economic system is inherently unstable. Profits tend to accumulate out of the hands of consumers and concentrate into the hands of a few wealthy people. When the people who spend run out of money, then the people who save can't get any more profits, and the whole system collapses. Ironically, during economic downfalls, many of the savers lose a lot of money, too, and even go bankrupt.

Upon the advent of earlier economic crises such the Great Depression, means were taken to prevent excessive concentration and control of wealth by the few. The founding fathers of the USA invoked an aggressive estate tax to prevent the emergence of an aristocracy and power that was obtained by mere luck of birth. Antitrust laws were created to prevent monopolies. Labor unions were finally allowed to protect wages and the consumer spending so vital to the endurance of an economy. Banking legislation prevented the formation of banks that were too large to fail, and Glass-Steagall prevented banks from problematic conflicts of interest. Progressive tax rates diluted money out of the hands of the wealthy and some of it back in the hands of consumers, reducing dangerous build-ups and improving economic activity.

However, once the shock of the Great Depression ended, and memory of the social debt owed to the veterans of World War II receded, big business interests began to dismantle these economic protections. Progressive tax rates were significantly rolled back. Manufacturing was transferred on a near emergency basis to Japan and elsewhere to bypass North American unions. China was given most favored nation status by the USA that greatly accelerated this process. Banking "games" lead to the destruction and theft of the previously consumer-owned savings and loan associations. Glass-Steagall was revoked, allowing consumer banks to engage in especially risky investment banking operations. Such banks could now issue fraudulent consumer mortgages and package them into instruments for unsuspecting investors.

As consumers ran out of money, we increasingly became a "debt" economy. With domestic wages falling or frozen due to often subsidized foreign competition, consumers turned to home equity loans, student loans and credit cards to maintain their former standard of living. U.S. Federal Reserve chair Allan Greenspan called lenders heroes of the economy. As consumers could not afford to take on more debt, banks whipped up profits by doubling, tripling, etc. consumer loan interest rates. Rates exceeding 50% were common.

Finally, the wealthy couldn't make enough money by actually producing anything or even lending to consumers at what were once legally usurious rates. They began buying and selling exotic financial instruments known by cryptic names such as butterfly options, derivatives, puts and calls. A particularly devastating was the "naked short". It allowed a party to make large amount of money by selling millions of shares of nonexistent stock, flooding the market with this bogus stock until the market price of that stock collapsed and drove the underlying company out of business. The naked short sellers made fortunes, the newly unemployed executives received their \$10 million golden parachutes, the laid-off employees received a few months of unemployment aid, and the pension funds/mom-and-pop investors received shallowly apologetic letters (if even that).

The only thing that saved the global economy from total melt-down was unprecedented government financial injections into banks, companies and certain national budgets (e.g. USA, China), and other stimulus measures.

AN ECONOMY ON LIFE-SUPPORT

Supposedly, we learned our lessons after the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 nearly melted down the entire global economy. A few consumer protections were enacted. Banks were slightly more regulated, and given FDIC protection for their high-risk investment banking operations (this latter should *really* terrify you). Lending was tightened up for consumers. Pensions were

cut. European economies adopted severe austerity measures. Numerous automobile manufacturers were sold off to China. Indeed, the global economy has regained some semblance of order.

Yet, **DO NOT be deceived!** This is clearly an economy on life support. The Global Financial Crisis has resulted in tremendously-increased concentration of wealth and consequentially has produced long-term damage to consumer spending. Once the stimulus ends, the economy will return to chaos. It may even do so with continued stimulus.

The following graph shows how ill the economy has become since 2008. This *Sizzle Index* is an indicator of US economic "heat". (It was developed by a member of Technocracy). Notice the peak at the year 2000 due to the dot com bubble. A second peak during 2005-2006 represents the housing bubble. Then in 2008 and 2009, the US economy literally fell off a cliff during the Global Financial Crisis. The Sizzle Index decline was about *triple* the magnitude of the dot com/9-11 crash of 2001. This was an unprecedented drop in recent times. This you already know.

What you may not know is what happened next. Despite some improvement of the US economy, the Sizzle Index is not only highly negative, but it is *still declining* despite massive quantitative easing (a more polite term for stimulus). The life energy is literally draining out of the economy despite massive. The deflationary pressures on Japan and Europe show similar declines globally.

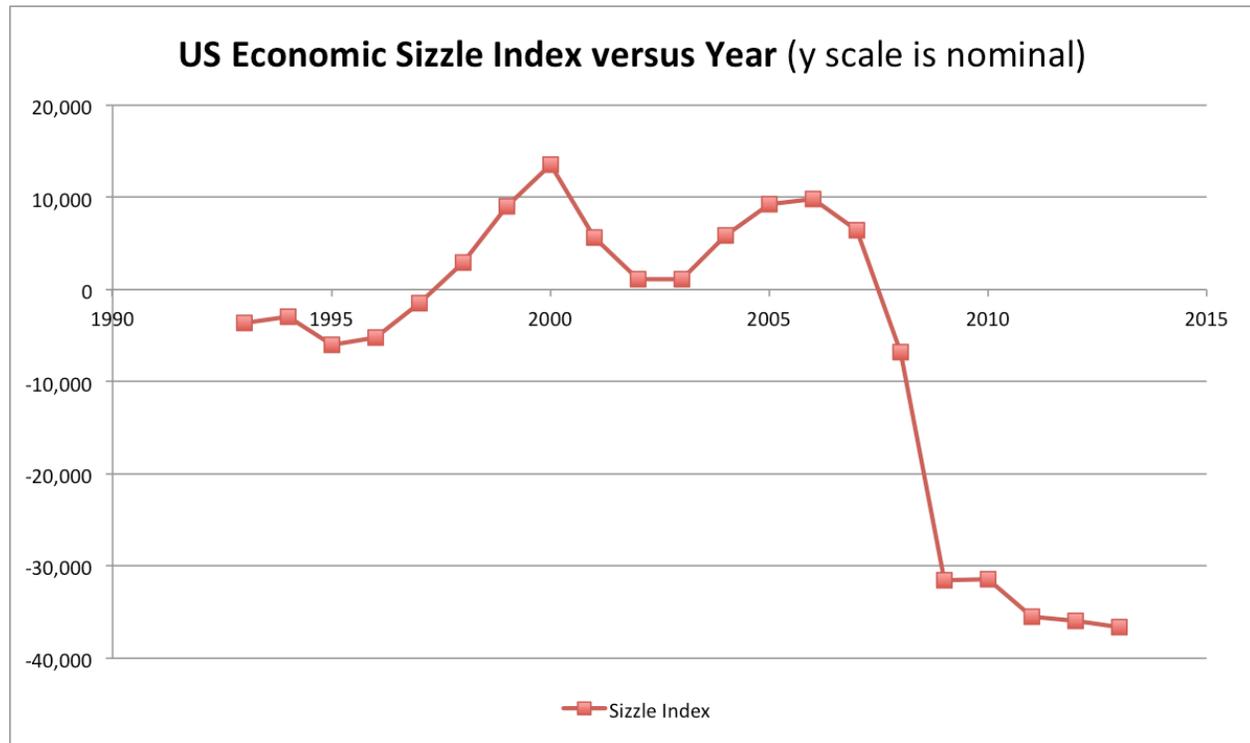


Figure 2: model developed by Mark Ciotola, 2008-2014

NOWHERE TO GO

Interest rates earned by large investors are at historic lows, due to ongoing stimulus. Meanwhile, these near-zero interest rates are devastating to retirees, and pension funds are in serious trouble. The Federal Reserve has been hoping to bring interest rates back up slightly, but the markets have been extremely resistant.

Federal Reserve must be terrified about recently increased volatility in stock markets. If the economy tanks again, there is nothing left of interest rates to cut!

TECHNOCRACY PREDICTED THIS!

One may ask why we are trapped in such a doomed economic system? Technocracy pointed out these problems, but people have tended to turn to illusory

Libertarian-sounding gimmicks. When wealth becomes too concentrated, lobbyist-driven legislatures cut taxes to allow money to “trickle down” to consumers. When wages fall, they open up more foreign competition to reduce living expenses. When consumers can’t borrow enough to make up for those lost wages, banks get deregulated and numerous consumer bankruptcy protections end. Do you see the pattern?

ENDGAME

The world probably won’t end due to this economic dead end we are racing towards. However, the situation may get so bad that many of us will wish we were dead: children we can’t support, the slavery of endless debt, and the environmental destruction of unrestrained economics. We either have to change our way to doing

things or face a future conceivable only from the worst science fiction films.

HOW TECHNOCRACY DESIGN CAN IMPROVE THINGS

The Technocracy Design covers many areas, but here are a few specific items that could turn overcome some of the worst problems. First, under a Technate (a technocratic government), the concentration of wealth would be prevented so that each person would have an income. Debt financing would be eliminated. Consumer spending and economic activity would be maintained. This would be accomplished by government ownership and operation of critical means of production, much as the Tennessee Valley Authority electric power supplier already successfully operates.

Second, the government would be run under scientific principles. Transportation

systems would be developed to be more efficient. Medical care would be provided in a manner to prevent poor health, and to deliver the best health care that is actually needed, rather than running up unnecessary costs and procedures just to increase billings and profits.

Third, the Technate would operate a truly sustainable society. Economic and environmental resources would not be depleted and destroyed just to accelerate quarterly profits growth, but run under sustainable principles. Farmlands, forests and waterways would be protected so that they can deliver benefits not just now but into the foreseeable future.

Technocracy proposes this and so much more, and you can learn about by reading through our materials.

MORE NEWS

SCIENTIFIC FREEDOM

On October 1 last year, the U.S. federal government shut its doors after Congress failed to pass a budget. For 16 days, around 800,000 government employees, many of them scientists, did nothing. The difficulties triggered \$85 billion in cuts. Most federal science programs were cut.

In the latest issue of *Index on Censorship*, the international freedom of expression magazine, Gretchen Goldman of the union of Concerned Scientists discusses the impact on the scientific community. Researchers reported all kinds of problems: once-in-a-lifetime trips of funding opportunities being

missed, laptops being confiscated, access to laboratories and email being blocked, vital data sources being cut off and peer review and journal publication being delayed.

After the cuts in March, many scientists were suddenly unable to travel to conferences, even ones they were scheduled to deliver keynote speeches at. This restricted their opportunities to exchange ideas and find out about others; work – both important parts of scientific free speech.

The shutdown only made matters worse. Scientific freedom of expression also includes the right to publish research and

contribute to discussions. Both were severely compromised. Another round of cuts is due this year.

Another favored destination is Canada. But there, too, scientists are worrying about free speech. They complain that government procedures and red tape are silencing them, or severely restricting their freedom to report on their research.

The cause of their concern is an official communications policy that came into force in 2006 and was updated in 2012. Federal scientists complain that the policy prevents them from speaking to the media unless they have the consent of press officers, leading to delays or vetoes on communications with the public.

Shutting down scientific discourse and suppressing scientists' freedom of speech is never a good idea. Democratic societies thrive on good scientific advice, and scientists are often the whistle-blowers when trouble is brewing. History is littered with deaths and disasters that could have been

New technologies, particularly when one is talking about the human brain, are bound to make people nervous. Any brain-enhancing techniques will have to be evaluated case by case, as society comes to a fuller understanding of their trade-offs.

avoided if evidence had not been ignored or suppressed, including the spread of BSE (mad cow disease), the MMR vaccine controversy and the delay in proving the link between smoking and lung cancer.

Openness is, of course, vital to science. Through the ages scientists have worked to create institutions where they can have free debates and discussions to help them finesse their ideas or develop new ones.

Governments also do themselves no favors by forcing scientists to stay silent when asked for information by the public or media. In enforcing silence, they undermine themselves and the reputation of their nation.

Rachel Jolley, "Lands of the free?" *New Scientist*, April 12, 2014.

COMMENT: One might save money by strangling one's self. But it would seem doubtful that most would recommend it especially if it applied to them.

Roy H. Hamilton & Jihad Zreik, "Wired for Thought", *Scientific American*, February 2014.

COMMENT: Considering the social concerns that are currently being faced, an improvement in intelligence would seem to be welcomed.

SOLAR STORM

Warnings have come from several quarters that the Earth is vulnerable to large solar storms every 100 to 500 years. The construction of the U.S. grid as well as much of the rest of the world is highly susceptible

to great damage as a result. The last time the Earth saw such a solar storm was in 1859. At that time there was little in the society dependent on electric power. The result was disruption and a lot of damage to the

telegraph system. The aurora borealis was seen in Cuba. In Colorado gold miners thought it was morning and began fixing breakfast. It was 1 am.

Today North America as well as most of the rest of the world is highly dependent on electrical grids. In the U.S. the damage could take days or months to repair. The disruption to the human social order would likely be staggering. Certainly the worst damage would be to large power converting transformers which are very difficult to replace. Without the technology that has been developed on North America the area might have been able to support as many as twenty million or so people at a new Stone Age level. The problem is that not only have all those skills been lost, so have the necessary resources. The results of going back to that level are not difficult to imagine.

Gregory J. Millman, "Catastrophic Solar Storm Inevitable, Insurers Warn", *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2014.

COMMENT: Technocracy Inc. has promoted the concept of a continental grid for decades but few have paid any attention to it. The whole population would feel a

massive impact if and *when* such a storm occurs. The continental grid currently proposed by the organization would permit the transference of the electrical peak power demand that occurs every morning as people are getting up and when they come home at night after work. That would dramatically reduce the amount of excess production now required to service those peak all across the area. At the same time a great deal of readily available non-fossil fuel power exists in areas that don't need the power. As an example the wind power existing in the Midwest which is mostly farm area could be harvested on such a broad base as to provide a significant addition to base load.

The line currently proposed would be capable of one million volts DC at 20,000 amperes. Such a capacity could send most any amount of power where it was needed. It would be carried in concrete raceways with the positive on one side of the freeway and the negative on the other. Substations would be needed approximately every six hundred miles. Such a line could be protected by a grounding grid.

NUCLEAR WASTE REACTOR

Start-up businesses in nuclear power are very rare. Now there appear to be two new ones. A small group of nuclear scientists are proposing the use of reactor waste using the energy still contained in it to produce more power. At the center of conventional reactors are rods of uranium submerged in water. The uranium reacts with the other rods to produce heat which boils the water surrounding them and the steam produces

power driving turbines. The trouble is that, by the time the rods need replacing, only about one-twentieth of the radioactive material they contain has been used up, so these power plants quickly accumulate highly radioactive waste.

The scientists involved in the project are proposing what they are calling the "Waste Annihilating Molten Salt" reactor, which is being developed by Transatomic Power in

Cambridge, Massachusetts. The design calls for uranium and plutonium in used fuel rods to be dissolved in a tank of liquid lithium-fluoride salts. Heat from the radioactive elements builds within the salt, which can then be circulated out of the reactor's core to a heat exchanger, where water is turned into steam to drive a turbine.

The design should mean that a disaster like the one in Fukushima, Japan, is out of the question: in the case of a power outage, the unchecked heating of the molten salt would melt a plug below the core, draining the salt into a containment vessel that dissipates the

heat. This would allow it to cool and solidify within a few hours, locking in any hazardous materials.

If all the nuclear waste currently in existence was reused in such reactors, they could supply the entire plant's power needs for 72 years, carbon-free, claims Leslie Dewan, the company's chief science officer.

Bill Gates is funding a similar concept but is much less forthcoming about its operations.

Martin LaMonica, "Atomic boom", *New Scientist*, April 12, 2014.

THE INTERNET

To the children of this connected era, the world is one giant social network. They are not bound – as were previous generations of humans – by what they were taught. They are limited by their curiosity and ambition. During my childhood, all knowledge was local. You learned everything you knew from your parents, teacher, preachers and friends. If you were privileged and had access to a library or an encyclopedia, you could learn a little more. You surely couldn't follow and reach out to the people that you read about; learn what people all over the world had to say; or ask the difficult, uncomfortable, questions.

With the high-quality and timely information at their fingertips and encouragement from each other, today's children are rising above the fears and biases of their parents. That is why youths in the Middle East are fermenting revolutions and the Chinese are getting restless.

Adults are also participating in this revolution; India's normally docile middle

class is speaking up against social ills. Silicon Valley executives are being shamed into adding women to their boards. Political leaders, such as President Barack Obama, are marshaling the energy of millions for elections and political causes. All of this is being done with social media technologies that Facebook and its competitors unleashed. The might of social media already has the Chinese government trembling. Its people are informing each other of local government officials' atrocities and their abuses of power. In New Delhi, we witnessed a political revolution happen as an anti-corruption party came out of nowhere to gain power in the state elections. Political scandals in the United States have become more common because people speak up immediately.

There is not greater force for democracy than social media, and this will empower the masses. So far, only about 2 billion of the world's 7 billion people have come online. During this decade, another 3 billion will

gain connectivity through cheap tablets. Devices that have capabilities similar to iPads will be available for less than \$50.

Regardless of what social media people use, one thing is certain: we are in a period of exponential change. The next decade will be even more amazing and unpredictable than the last. Just as no one could predict what

would happen with social media in that last decade, no one can accurately predict where this technology will take us. I am optimistic, however, that a connected humanity will find a way to uplift itself.

Vivek Wadhwa, “With social media, it’s a changed world”, *The Oregonian*, February 9, 2014.

BRAIN BOOST

Researchers are finding ways to rev up the human brain like never before. Modern society has already embraced the basic idea of fine-tuning our intellects via artificial procedures – what might be termed “cosmetic” neurology. School children take Adderall, Concerta and other attention – focusing medications, and self-help books offer the latest advances in neuroscience to help ordinary people think faster and sharper.

Add to those advances another cognitive-enhancement method: transcranial direct-current stimulation (tDCS). With this technique, electrodes applied to the scalp deliver minuscule amperages to current to the brain. This trickle of electricity seems to cause incremental adjustments in the

electrical potentials of membranes in the neurons closest to the electrodes, increasing or decreasing their likelihood of firing. And that, in turn, induces measureable changes in memory, language, mood, motor function, attention and other cognitive domains.

Investigators still aren’t sure whether tDCS can cause long-term neural changes. Although most tests show only transient effects, there is limited evidence that repeated applications might have more persistent results. The procedure is not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the consensus among experts is that it should be performed only under qualified supervision. Nevertheless, if used properly, it is safe, portable, easy to implement and inexpensive.

TECHNOCRACY IN ACTION

TECHNOCRACY BLOG ONLINE!

Tune in to the Technocracy blog for news, commentary and satire. This month, George Wright of CHQ posts a “tongue-in-cheek” yet thought-provoking piece on aliens and strife on Earth—perfect timing for Halloween. Read and continue the discussion at: <http://www.technocracy.org/category/technocracy-blog/>

Ohio Technocrat Clayton Hartley Remembered



Clayton Hartley, 97, a Barberton, Ohio resident for most of his life, died on Wednesday, September 24th 2014 of natural causes.

“Clayton was a true Technocrat, “ according to George Wright of CHQ. “His dedication was unsurpassed as was his work in helping others know of the dynamic forces of change at our doorstep and how best to accommodate those changes. We considered Clayton to be a prime representative of Technocracy in the mid-west.” Hartley was a self-employed masonry contractor during his working years and was active in political organizations, writing many "Letters to the Editor". He enjoyed woodworking, science, inventing, and many other creative endeavors.

This is an official publication of:

Technocracy, Inc.

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& Canadian hard copy subscriptions mailed by regular post.
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