

What Can Politicians Tell to the Voters about the Loss of Old-Style Jobs?

by

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The world is in a state of transformation from the Old economy to a New economy, i.e. from the 2nd Industrial Revolution to the 3rd Industrial Revolution (TiR ¹). Besides all the latest gadgets we buy, online purchases we like to make, the movies we download, the main change is and will be in the employment market. When moving into TiR many jobs will be lost and some new ones will be created but of a different character. Regional areas appear to be affected more because a lot of these new jobs seem to be city based.

This creates a difficulty for politicians what do they say to their electorate? “For many of you the job you have or had will soon no longer exist. And there is nothing they as politicians can do personally or do as a government collectively anything about”. In the same breath tell the voters that lost jobs cannot be returned and that there maybe a possibility for new jobs but in a different fields. As well as trying to persuade the voters to vote for them who tell these unsettling facts.

Like in the 1960s, when I grew up in The Netherlands, textile jobs were lost to Asian countries . And coalmines were closed because they could not compete with cheap imported coal from Australia. These job losses had major impact on their regions. None of these jobs ever came back during the last 50+ years and will never return.

Unfortunately a lot of voters get fooled by promises made by the likes of Trump, Hanson, Le Pen or Farage about return of jobs lost. These promises cannot be fulfilled.

The only way to overcome the problem of misinformation is to get help from the media in explaining what the likely trends are. But what is happening in the popular media especially is not helpful, coming up with emotional arguments that are not based on trends and evidence, doing as if there is a way back to the “good old days”. A good start would be if the Andrew Bolts of the world would be open to understand where technology is moving the work, what is the impact this has on employment. In addition if they would fight for the future of this new world and help their audience prepare for the changing circumstances. And emphasise that the past will never comeback. They also should promote demands on governmental help for transitional support and training. Then politicians may start talking more realistically about future of jobs and make a positive contribution towards a successful transition into the TiR.

1 Jeremy Rifkin : The Third Industrial Revolution