

I. R. II: Yes or No?

Are businessmen on their toes?

By HENRY BUND, of the Research Institute of America.

THE imaginative and persuasive picture of the imminent age of atomic energy and automation painted in this issue of *The Saturday Review* must resolve whatever doubts may have lingered in the minds of even the most callous and skeptical. These twin forces—for good or for evil—are realities today, and their complete penetration of our economic and social structure is a matter of a measurable and relatively short time.

How will the transition be achieved? How broad and how deep will be the participation by American business in these developments which spell a new industrial and economic era? And how balanced or unbalanced will be the impact on our economy, earning opportunities, and social organization? For the first significant indications the Research Institute went to business itself, as represented by its Membership, composed of large companies and small, covering most fields of business endeavor. The answers obtained are both encouraging and disquieting.

Taking the broad, positive picture first, the American businessman, as represented by the more than 1,000 companies replying to the institute's survey, is acutely conscious of the presence and the impending rapid expansion of both atomic energy and automation. Roughly one-third expect to see the first atomic application in their industry within the next ten years, and an even higher proportion look for extensive automation in their field within the same span of time. Another third, though uncertain about the timing, also anticipates these developments. This leaves less than one-third who feel at this time that atomic energy and automation will never have any specific impact on their particular trades or industries.

On the positive side, too, is the fact that some 16 per cent see automation as a significant factor in their industries right now. Nearly 5 per cent are presently experimenting or actively working with atomic materials and this number will double if present plans are carried out—figures which clearly reflect the rapidly multiplying uses of atomic by-products for testing, inspection, and production. Finally, there is ample evidence that the busi-

ness community is lacking in neither curiosity nor awareness. Nearly one out of every five firms has definitely assigned someone on its staff to watch significant atomic development—although such an assignment may still represent just an extra chore.

It is significant how the number of these positive responses begins to shrink as the focus becomes sharper, the questions become more specific. Despite the indicated intellectual acceptance of the reality of both atomic energy and automation, inaction and lack of planning are typical of the majority's attitude. Right now better than 90 per cent have no contact of

any kind with atomic material; three out of four have no plans to work with such materials in the foreseeable future. The picture on automation is essentially similar. One-third believe they will never use automation in their own companies while another third see automation being widely adopted in their field in the uncertain future if indeed it ever is so accepted. Even among those who see automation coming into extensive use in their respective industries within the next ten years three out of five see no possibility whatever of adopting the new devices within their own operations.

Even these comparisons do not tell the full story. Clearly, both atomic energy and automation, at this stage of development, require the ability and willingness to invest substantial sums of money with all of the risks and potential rewards which any large pioneering ventures involve. The institute's survey clearly brings out the very uneven, highly selective way in

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1. *When do you expect to see the first applications of atomic energy or its by-products in your industry?*

Now	7.8%	By '64 or sooner	22.6%	'65 or later	10.5%
Uncertain		28.2%	Never	30.9%	

2. *Is anyone on your staff currently assigned to watch atomic developments?*

Yes	19.3%	No	80.7%
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- 2A. *Percentage of "Yes" answers to the above question for each size employe-group of companies:*

100 or less	12.6%	101-500	18.5%	Over 500	32.4%
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3. *Are you now actively experimenting or working with atomic materials?*

Yes	4.9%	No	95.1%
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- 3A. *Percentage of "Yes" answers to Question 3 for each size employe-group of companies:*

100 or less	2.4%	101-500	3.3%	Over 500	10.4%
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4. *Do you plan actively to experiment or work with atomic materials?*

Yes	15.5%	No	84.5%
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- 4A. *In what year? (Percentage of "Yes" answers to Question 1 only)*

Within ten years	61.3%	Later	4.2%	Uncertain	34.5%
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5. *How soon do you expect automation to be extensive in your industry?*

Now	16.3%	By '64 or sooner	22.9%	'65 or later	8.1%
Uncertain		19.1%	Never	33.6%	

6. *When will you use automation in your company?*

Now	17.6%	By '64 or sooner	17.1%	'65 or later	4.9%
Uncertain		26.0%	Never	34.4%	

- 6A. *Percentage of "Now" answers to Question 6 for each size employe-group of companies:*

100 or less	11.6%	101-500	16.5%	Over 500	28.6%
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—Leja Gorska.

BEHIND THE BOOK: The Great Lives in Brief Series, the first five of which are being published this week, is a splendid example of Alfred A. Knopf dashing to the rescue of the neglected reader—the adult with an intelligent, if unscholarly, curiosity about the men and women who make history fun. “Neglected” is Mr. Knopf’s word, and its life will be recounted in brief, which is the way Mr. Knopf would probably like it. A few years back—1952, to be exact—the editors at Knopf exhaustively researched the field of biography, their aim being to determine whether authoritative biographies of 50,000 to 60,000 words were being written. Their findings were later crystallized in their boss’s statement: “A large and discerning class of readers is being neglected by present-day biographers, most of whom attempt to uncover and to produce definitive works.” Mr. Knopf quickly made it clear he had nothing against definitive works, had even published them himself, but he and all the other little Knopfs nevertheless felt that such neglect had to be rooted out.

In a creative huff G.L. in B. was conceived. “*Multum in parvo*” became the project’s theme. Library officials, polled on the idea, liked it. Knopf editors, delighted, plucked more than 150 likely candidates out of history, a gathering that was eventually decimated. The lives of the lucky survivors were assigned to writers who knew their subjects inside out, their job being to write concisely, authoritatively, and well. Henry Ford, for example, was assigned to Roger Burlingame, a Harvard ’13 A.B., who has written a whole shelf of books on American technology and mass production. With five lives coming out at one swoop (Hans Christian Andersen, Alexander Dumas, Charles Darwin, Mahatma Gandhi, in addition to Ford). Great Lives in Brief will knock off until April, when Napoleon III and Gilbert Stuart will be published. James J. Hill will be out in May, and Julius Caesar and Elizabeth I will walk down the publishing aisle together in June. —BERNARD KALB.

BUSINESS

Mr. Model T. Simple Mystery

“Henry Ford,” by Roger Burlingame (Alfred A. Knopf, 194 pp. \$2.50), is the first volume in a new series of Great Lives in Brief, short biographies of men and women whose careers were of great significance and have a wide interest. Here it is reviewed by Samuel T. Williamson, first editor of Newsweek, co-author of “The Road Is Yours,” an account of fifty years of the automobile and its makers; at present he is editing Charles E. Sorensen’s reminiscences of his forty years with Ford.

By Samuel T. Williamson

HISTORY,” Henry Ford once said, “is more or less bunk.” And so, too, is a goodly number of books about Ford. There are incense-burners like Samuel Crowther and Rose Wilder Lane. There are debunkers like Jonathan Leonard and hostiles like Keith Sward. There is disillusioned Dean Marquis and the ingrate, kick-and-tell Harry Bennett. Whatever you want to believe about Henry Ford, your preconceived notions should find comfort in one of the foregoing categories. But no portrait emerges that is a true likeness.

“We cannot forever discuss the morals or the ethics of a man who contributed such values to civilization,” says Roger Burlingame. “The time must come when he will be accepted as a great historic fact; not in the rightness or wrongness of his individual acts.”

With the collaboration of Frank Ernest Hill and the dredging of a squad of researchers among the 4,657 linear feet of boxed records and 17,500 pages of transcribed reminiscence in the Ford archives Allan Nevins came up last year with a two-pound, fourteen-ounce examination which brings Ford down to the year 1915 and is a greater monument than living picture. The paradox of definitive biography is that it seems easier to portray a many-sided subject than a simple one. Definers and analysts stumble over the simple man and read all sorts of complexities out of the enigma of his simplicity. Ford’s basic make-up was, as he once said

of his Model T, “so simple that it seems mysterious.”

Ford was a trial-and-error tinkerer; hence his contradictions. By tinkering, by hit-and-miss, he and his associates eventually, as Mr. Burlingame eloquently puts it, “turned the rich man’s toy into the plain man’s utility.” That brought about an industrial system which reshaped the American way of life and work and economic outlook. It was no more planned that way than could Ford and his cheap car be duplicated today.

The world which Ford did so much to change has itself changed. The folk for whom Model T was made won’t buy modern versions of it lest people think they can’t afford a more expensive car. Eleven years ago Ford Motor Company set up a “low-price car” division and abolished it five months later because the buying public showed no interest. Thus has mass consumption renounced that which created it.

Mr. Burlingame acknowledges the likelihood that what Ford accomplished was possible only in the precise years in which he lived. Ford shared profits by raising wages and lowering prices; now Government has the first take of profits, beginning at 52 per cent. Any wage increase introduced in the way he established the five-dollar day would cause him to be haled before the National Labor Relations Board for unfair practice because the deed was done without union consultation.

Yet, admits Mr. Burlingame, “Ford was not an inevitable product of his time. He was original and revolutionary. He never once allowed the impossibilities of the past to limit the possibilities of the future. This, above all, was what he meant when he said that history was bunk.”

SO far so good. But all that Ford had to contend with were voices of

