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LEONARD E. READ *President, Foundation for
Economic Education*

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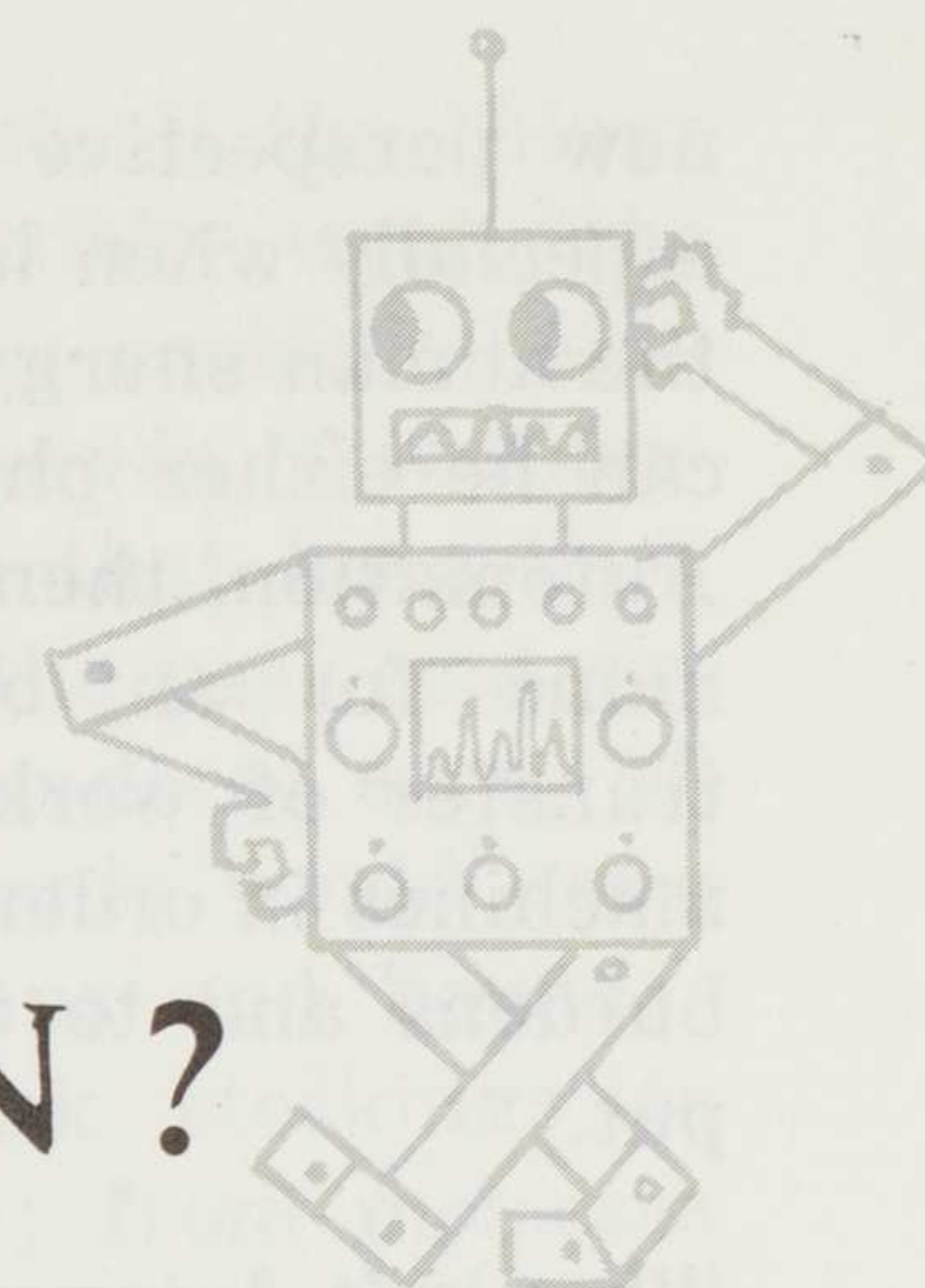
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WHY AUTOMATION ?

TOM ROSE

*Concerning the relations of prices and customers
to wages and employees*

AUTOMATION is a popular topic of discussion. Almost everyone is willing to express an opinion about it. Union leaders claim automation causes mass unemployment. Businessmen welcome it as a way to remain competitive. And social reformers use the "threat" of automation to plan new welfare programs.

The purpose of this article is to bring into focus some of the little-known aspects of automation and to stimulate and help crystallize thinking about automation and its ever-present twin, technological change.

Mr. Rose is Director of Economic Education, Associated Industries of Missouri.

Some years ago a young man was hired to turn small boxes at right angles on a conveyor belt. After a few days he found that, by holding his finger at a certain angle, the boxes turned properly when they came in contact with it. The next day he brought a stick to work, clamped it to make proper contact with the boxes, and thereby "automated" his job!

One definition for automation is "the use of machinery to control machinery." But this is simply a refinement of the practical conveyor example given above. When a person views computers and automatically controlled machines in this way, he is apt to gain a