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Mass employment in manufacturing just isn't coming back [1]

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It's a consitent trope from those over on the mouth breathing left, that everything would just be better if we did more manufacturing in the UK. More specifically, that if we just had more manufacturing then everyone would be employed. Which would be so nice, wouldn't it?

The problem with this is that mass employment in manufacturing just isn't coming back. Ever.

Manufacturing output in the UK kept going up until 2005 or so (with variations for recessions, to be sure). Manufacturing output in the US is still going up and I don't think anyone needs to be reminded that manufacturing output in China is rising. However, rising output does not mean more jobs. Not necessarily at least. Looking at [3] manufacturing output and manufacturing employment from 1992 to 2002 we get the following very interesting figures:

> I estimate global manufacturing employment to have been between 150 million and 200 million workers in 2002, with those numbers reflecting a global decline of 20-30 million manufacturing employees in 2002 compared to 1995. I also estimate that China employed between one-fourth and one-half of that global total. Meanwhile, China?s manufacturing productivity growth, estimated at 60% between 1995 and 2002, should have cost China 37 million manufacturing jobs over that period, while China?s even more rapid GDP growth should have added back 42 million jobs, for a net addition of 5 million manufacturing jobs. Yet, Bannister (2004) reports that China actually lost17 million manufacturing jobs between 1995 and 2002?net job losses that approximated the total US manufacturing employment during that time frame.

Yes, China is losing manufacturing jobs. The world as a whole is losing manufacturing jobs. The cause is exactly the same thing that led to the loss of agricultural jobs 80 to 90 years ago: increasing productivity in that activity.

There might be all sorts of things that we could do about this, how to create jobs for people to do, but agitating for a return to mass employment in manufacturing just isn't one of them. Those days are over, dead and gone, and they're simply not coming back.

Which means that those stomping around the political arena calling for that return are just pining for the fjords, sorry, but it really is a dead parrot, not one that is resting.

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