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# Age of Telecommuting May Be Near

THE gratifying thought of not having to get up and maneuver through traffic to get to work probably has occurred to everyone.

Some people may think of it every morning, but random reports indicate relatively few absentees on payday. Retirees place high value on avoidance of the daily drive to the daily grind.

Times may be changing in this aspect of employment. Computer technology and human nature may be moving us into an era of "telecommuting," where we may attend to our jobs without leaving home.

This already is happening. For example, a computer expert for an Oklahoma City bank offices in a den of her home on the shores of Lake Texoma, 150 miles away. She uses a computer console to communicate with computers in the bank whenever problems need her attention.

Executives may use telephones, conference calls and short wave radio to transact business away from their offices on a larger scale than is generally realized. It is not necessary for a person to reveal where he

is calling from in order to talk trade.

Video tubes on telecomputers can display almost instantly an amazing array of information on profit and loss statements, inventories, market prices, legal questions, sales or whatever may be needed.

According to one manufacturer's advertisements, you don't have to be an expert typist to use symbols on these devices to call what you need out of the computer's memory bank.

As robots proliferate in factories to paint cars, assemble mechanical or other devices, fill orders and do many kinds of routine work, human beings employed to oversee them complain of increasing monotony and boredom.

There is no assurance that the same people might not become bored with the monotony of doing similar work at home, but there seems to be considerable interest on the part of many to try it.

A British company that started by hiring computer programmers to work at home with pencil and paper

now has more than 600 employees with home terminals plugged into central office computers.

There is opposition to extending trends in having employees do their work at home, however. When the U.S. Department of Labor recently proposed removal of a 40-year old ban on industrial work at home, labor unions and garment manufacturers shouted it down.

They claimed that opening up "cottage industries" would encourage sweatshop conditions and create unfair competition for "legitimate businesses." Proponents contended that the ban had not prevented exploitation of workers by unscrupulous employers.

Transportation and parking problems may support arguments for telecommuting.

Any notion that workers might have that they would escape supervision by doing their jobs at home may be short-lived. Remote control TV already is being used to maintain surveillance in many places. The boss could install a camera along with the telecomputer.