Introduction to “The Tip of the Spear: How Longshore Workers in the San Francisco Bay Area Survived the Containerization Revolution”

Victor G. Devinatz

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In this issue's Perspectives section article, Dr. Peter Cole, Professor of History at Western Illinois University, has authored an interesting, lively and well-written article on how the International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) dealt with the introduction of new technology, specifically containerization, which revolutionized how longshore work was performed by the union's members. Specifically, the paper argues that despite containerization making modern-day globalization possible and leading to the dramatic loss of longshore jobs on the West coast docks, the ILWU still retained a surprising amount of power at its work sites. This story offers lessons to unions as a whole in the 21st century which must confront technological changes in the workplace. While often posing serious challenges to the nature of work and to the continued existence of labor organizations, the introduction of technological innovations does not mean that unions will ultimately be destroyed in the process.

If any of the journal's readers would like to respond to essays published in the “Perspectives” Section or would like to write on any topics in the field of employee relations, please do not hesitate to contact me with your proposal. I welcome both practitioner-based and scholarly-based articles written from any one of a variety of theoretical perspectives. I hope that you enjoy this article and find it most illuminating.

V. G. Devinatz (✉)

Department of Management & Quantitative Methods, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-5580, USA
e-mail: vgdevin@ilstu.edu