

Nuts and Bolts: Stories from New Britain Manufacturing
Connecticut Humanities CT at Work Project
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Interview Subject: Fred Calcinari
Factory Subject worked at National Welding, American Hardware and General Electric

Technological Advancement

The head bosses told the men not to worry that “these machines aren’t going to take your place.” Mistakenly, they believed them. Little by little, more computers, robots and advanced machines were brought in to do the work once done by hand. Although this transition was done over the course of several years, it wasn’t until Fred Calcinari took a step back that he realized what was really happening.

The “robots” were able to do the work of six men in half the time. Layoffs were inevitable and it was just a matter of time until workers had to face the fact that times were changing and everything was becoming more technological. The computerized machines couldn’t get injured, therefore never needed time off. They were more effective and efficient than the human hand. The companies made it so these machines were always running, even through the night. They never needed coffee breaks, bathroom breaks, or vacation time. Thankfully for Fred, this transition was towards the end of his working life, so he didn’t have to worry about losing his job to a technological advancement.

The companies never warned the workers this transition would be occurring; instead they assured them their jobs were safe. They didn’t want their workers quitting on them, or slacking off before the machines took full effect. Not everyone got laid off when the transition occurred, though. Fred said that “they had to train people in different ways to work with the robotics” or they “had to become educated in something else and go into a different line of work.”