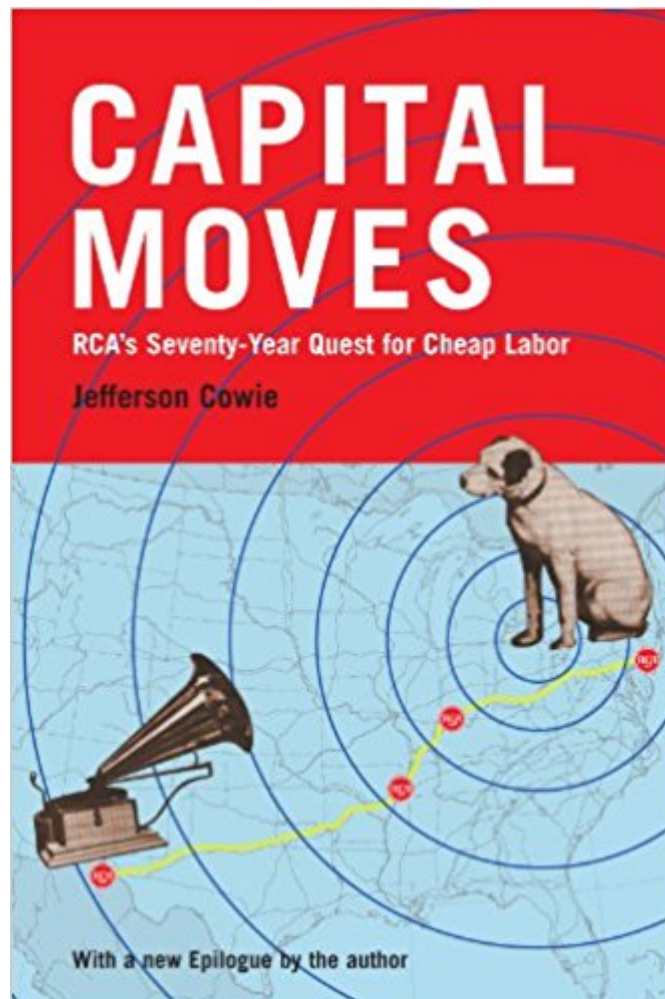


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Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest For Cheap Labor (with A New Epilogue)



Synopsis

Globalization is the lead story of the new century, but its roots reach back nearly one hundred years, to major corporations' quest for stable, inexpensive, and pliant sources of labor. Before the largest companies moved beyond national boundaries, they crossed state lines, abandoning the industrial centers of the Eastern Seaboard for impoverished rural communities in the Midwest and South. In their wake they left the decaying urban landscapes and unemployment rates that became hallmarks of late twentieth-century America. This is the story that Jefferson Cowie, in a stunningly important work of historical imagination and rediscovery • (Nelson Lichtenstein), tells through the lens of a single American corporation, RCA. *Capital Moves* takes us through the interconnected histories of Camden, New Jersey; Bloomington, Indiana; Memphis, Tennessee; and Juárez, Mexico "four cities radically transformed by America's leading manufacturer of records and radio sets. In a sweeping narrative of economic upheaval and class conflict, Cowie weaves together the rich detail of local history with the national and ultimately international story of economic and social change.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Capital Moves" is both a geographical history of the Radio Corp or America (RCA) from its inception in Camden, NJ in 1929 through its several relocations of factories to various regions of the US and beyond and a work of sociology as it examines the nature of the various local communities and the workforces both before and after the arrival of RCA. RCA, like many industrial concerns in

the so-called Rust Belt, has always been concerned with operating in locales with favorable labor relations. It was the community characteristics of having a large pool of unemployed workers with limited wage expectations and no history of industrial activism that impelled RCA to move the production of its consumer products, mostly radios and televisions, from Camden in the 1940s to Bloomington, IN, and ultimately to Juarez, Mexico beginning in the 1970s. But the mass production regimes that were established had the unintended effect of significantly altering the social environments into which they moved. Certainly anti-unionism triggered some of the plant closings that began in the 1970s in the Rust Belt, but RCA actually tolerated the compliant unionism that they recognized in Bloomington and then in Juarez. It was the very nature of the production process instituted by RCA that triggered the worker discontent that they so ardently sought to avoid. The speedup and deskilling under scientific management, the petty authoritarianism, the ignoring of work rules and job classifications, and gender inequities - all sparked resentment and resistance; but did result in some alleviation of the complaints.

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