Book Review: When Good Jobs Go Bad by Jeffrey S. Rothstein

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Abstract

In 1996, auto assembly jobs were among the best blue-collar jobs in the United States, in Mexico, and around the world. In 2016, auto assembly jobs are still among the best blue-collar jobs in the United States, in Mexico, and around the world. But those jobs are appreciably worse than they were in 1966—pay is much lower in relative terms (especially for new hires), the benefit package is far more limited, the pace of work is brutal, and the implicit threat of closing looms over every assembly plant across the globe.

Why? Jeffrey Rothstein’s insightful When Good Jobs Go Bad takes on this question, connecting the degradation of auto work to broader processes of globalization. To come up with answers, he spent years doing ethnography at three General Motors plants that during the years of his study cranked out around a million SUVs a year to supply the North American market. These three factories, in addition to competing head-to-head, represent three distinct cohorts of GM production facilities: the Janesville, Wisconsin, plant (which closed in 2008) dated to 1919, the dawn of U.S. auto mass production centered in the Midwest; the Arlington, Texas, plant opened in 1954, the heyday of the sector but also a time of expansion to lower-cost sites across the United States; the Silao, Guanajuato (Mexico), facility opened in 1994, timed to take advantage of NAFTA as globalization went into full swing.

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Refbacks

There are currently no refbacks.