Springfield's Urban Histories:

Essays on the Queen City of the Missouri Ozarks

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From Zenith to Nadir: The Story of Springfield's Largest Manufacturing Plant

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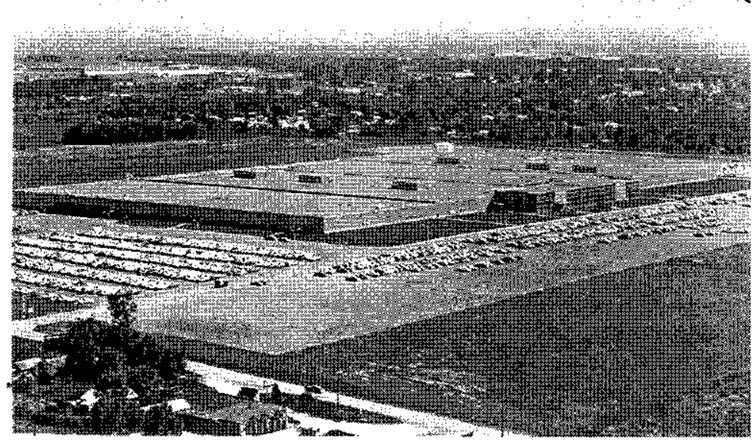
In 1967, Zenith Corporation opened what one manager later termed his company's "first foreign plant" in Springfield, Missouri. The manager was referring to the Company's relocation of manufacturing plants out of Chicago to lower-wage nonmetropolitan areas within the United States. After several expansions, the plant became the nation's largest television factory. The sprawling structure measured almost 1.7 million square feet—which is over 40 acres, or the equivalent of 30 football fields under one roof—and it employed nearly 5,500 people at its peak. During nearly three decades of operation, the plant had a greater impact on the local economy and on the lives of Ozarks workers than any other manufacturing operation ever located in the area. The factory received parts and services from some 100 Missouri firms and pumped millions of dollars annually into the Springfield economy.[1]

While the plant was the biggest, it also turned out to be the very last U.S.-owned television factory on American soil. When the labor savings that Zenith received by relocating manufacturing processes to lower-wage areas within the United States proved insufficient to shore up profit margins, the Company set up truly "foreign" plants in Mexico and closed its U.S. production operations. When the Springfield facility began to be closed in 1992, several thousand employees were put out of work. Many people were disappointed and angry with the shutdown. One woman who worked 21 years at Zenith commented on the closing announcement: "We knew it wasn't long for the world here, but it was still a disappointment when it came." A co-worker lamented, "They took the best part of my life. I'm a good worker, a hard worker. It's not right. It just makes you want to get people together and march some place." Most former employees endured 10 months or more of unemployment, their average pay on replacement jobs was down over 10 percent, and benefits on their new jobs were substantially fewer than they had been at Zenith.[2]

The layoffs had more than just a financial impact; they took an emotional toll as well. A 24-year Zenith veteran summed up a common emotion: "I thought I would retire from Zenith. It feels like the rug's being pulled out from under me. Nothing will ever be the same again." For many people, the Zenith jobs provided a sense of kinship that came from years of close, cooperative work on a bustling assembly line. As one worker put it,



Zenith factory.
Courtesy of Tim Knapp.

"You know their kids and grandkids. You know their dogs and cats. These people helped me through when my eldest son died two years ago. And I've been through the good and bad of other people."[3] After they got over the emotional shocks and learned to live with the financial setbacks, most employees eventually adjusted to life and work outside the plant and got on with their lives.

In the immediate aftermath of Zenith's closing, the local economy took a hard hit, as manufacturing employment dropped by over 2,800 jobs through the end of the decade. However, while the Springfield labor market wobbled, it did not crumble. Strong service sector job growth after 1994 sent total employment up by nearly 30 percent throughout the nineties.[4] Like the resilient former Zenith workers, the Springfield labor market weathered the economic storm caused by the TV plant shutdown.

The story of Zenith Corporation's opening, expanding, and then closing its TV factory in Southwest Missouri is complex and must be told at several levels. Internationally, there is the account of how Japanese industrialists, with the acquiescence of U.S. officials, carried out a coordinated economic assault that decimated the United States television production industry. Nationally, there is a tale of Zenith's reliance on rural operations to help fend off heightened international competition, and of managerial missteps by corporate executives that weakened the company. Locally, there is a poignant story of how working in and then being displaced from Zenith's factory impacted the lives of thousands of Springfield-area residents and their families. All of these accounts are intertwined. A common quip is that historians are "great abbreviators," and that is very true in this case. Still, the following account presents an outline of the international and national contexts in which Zenith opened, expanded, and then closed its Springfield television factory, and it captures many of the ways that the closing affected the lives of people who worked there.

The Rise and Decline of the American Television Manufacturing Industry

In 1927, Philo T. Farnsworth built a simple but functioning television set and acquired patent rights. In 1933, researchers at RCA Labs improved Farnsworth's camera tube technology and created a television that could be mass produced. In 1939, several TV stations began experimental broadcasts to the public, and late that year Franklin Roosevelt became the first president to appear on TV: The Television Age had begun. However, the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, and television manufacturing soon was suspended. Large-scale production did not resume until 1947. The 1950s saw significant improvements in black-and-white television technologies and the development of the first color TVs, and owning a TV became one of the symbols of middle-class life in America. Growing demand and rising real incomes sparked a surge in the U.S. television industry, and by the end of the decade, over 113,000 people were employed by twenty-eight U.S.-owned television manufacturing companies.[5] Zenith was one of the pioneering firms in that burgeoning industry.

The 1960s brought both the heyday and beginning of the end of the United States' television production industry. During that decade, employment in household audio and video equipment jobs rose by over 37 percent, and peak employment reached 162,000 workers in 1966. However, by the end of the decade, employment had dropped by 6,000 workers and some U.S. companies had closed or been bought by foreign conglomerates. Of the twenty-eight domestic television production companies in 1959, one third had gone under by 1968.[6]

Although employment rebounded slightly in the early 1970s, over 30,000 workers lost television production jobs from 1973 to 1979. And by the decade's end, only six U.S.-owned television manufacturing companies remained. A further 20,000 jobs were lost during the 1980s, and the decade sounded a virtual death knell for domestic television producers. Magnavox, Sylvania, Philco, G.E. and RCA were acquired by foreign firms. By 1990, Zenith was the only U.S. company remaining in the industry. But not for long, as in 1996, Zenith was acquired by a South Korean company. By then, all of the remaining 39,000 workers who assembled television receivers worked for foreign-owned companies. Those remaining workers had little to cheer about, as their real hourly wages had fallen over 12 percent

during the past dozen years. How did the once dominant U.S. television industry collapse in just a few decades? The answer is part history, "but it also is a crime story."[7]

Historical evidence reveals that the primary causes of the demise of U.S. TV manufacturing were falling prices for television sets and increasing market dominance by foreign producers. The 20 million TV sets sold in 1991 had an average retail price of $300, which was lower after adjusting for inflation than the typical set cost in 1969. Although low prices were good for consumers, they squeezed the profit margins of American TV companies in the 1970s and then drove bottom lines into the red during the eighties. Falling prices and slim profit margins might have been tolerable, since the number of units sold continued to rise throughout this period. However, U.S.-owned companies saw their domestic market share drop from over 80 percent of TVs sold in the late 1960s to only 14 percent of sets by the early 1990s. This market shift resulted both from sharply increased TV imports and from foreign firms' buy outs of U.S. companies and production facilities.[8] Although this account is superficially accurate, it leaves an essential question unanswered. How were Japanese companies able to sell TVs in the United States at prices so low that American firms could not compete?

Two answers have been offered to this question. The first explanation applies free market trade theory. In this account, countries that have a comparative advantage in making certain products should be export leaders in those goods. What gave Japanese companies a comparative advantage in producing TV sets? For Japanese government and industry leaders, the answer was obvious: Japanese employees were smarter, worked harder, and were more efficient than their U.S. counterparts. This long-held criticism of American workers became public in 1986, when Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone said that Americans have lower intelligence than the Japanese because of ethnic mixing in the U.S. Then, in 1992, a spate of Japanese officials continued the critique of U.S. workers. Yoshio Sakurauchi, the Speaker of Japan's lower House, said that Americans were lazy and 30 percent of them could not read. A conservative lawmaker argued that American workers were not productive on Fridays because they were mentally preparing for the weekend, and they "cannot throw themselves wholly into their work Mondays, as they played too hard Saturdays and Sundays." Two weeks later, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa told a parliamentary committee, "I have long thought that they (Americans) lack a work ethic . . . to live by the sweat of their brow." Such comments were an "ignorant expression of Japanese racism," according to the U.S. House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt.[9]

The problem with Japan's assertion of a comparative labor force advantage is that productivity statistics disprove that idea. In 1975, output per worker-hour in Japanese manufacturing was 35 percent below the output of American industrial workers. And, between 1972 and 1992, the number of TVs shipped per production worker from American factories rose over 340 percent, from 159 to 545 sets per worker.[10] Japanese companies had an advantage, but that leg up had nothing to do with smarter, more industrious workers or with more efficient production processes.

The second explanation for the decimation of the U.S. TV industry is the "crime story" account, in which under-handed Japanese industrialists and their government cronies conspired with compliant U.S. officials to take over the American consumer electronics market. Investigative journalists referred to this as "an economic Pearl Harbor," a "great TV raid . . . that verges on economic warfare," and a "television takeover."[11] While these stories sound fantastic, government records and court documents strongly support them.

In 1956, Japan's largest consumer electronics companies formed the Home Electronic Appliance Market Stabilization Council. The Council's plans were first to establish dominance in the Japanese market by excluding foreign imports, and then to expand into the far more lucrative American market. Council leaders worked with officials in the Japanese Government's Ministry of International Trade and Industry to erect a protectionist barrier through a combination of high tariffs, cumbersome import rules, pre-shipping inspections, and pressure on Japanese retailers to sell only Japanese-made sets. The strategy worked to near perfection. In 1976, only 500 of the 5 million television sets sold in Japan were made by non-Japanese companies. With generous export subsidies and tax abatements from the government, Japanese TV corporations launched the second phase of the Council's strategy, which was to enter and gain dominance in the large, lucrative American market.[12]

The renamed Television Export Council engaged in "dumping" tactics to gain a foothold and then an upper hand in the American market. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Japanese companies sold sets to American retailers at below fair market prices (dumping). In March 1968, a number of U.S. manufacturers petitioned the Treasury Department to enforce a 1921 anti-dumping law. Three years later, in March 1971, the Tariff Commission, which later became the International Trade Commission (ITC), declared that dumping had indeed injured U.S. industries, and that penalties and import duties needed to be assessed and collected. In a brilliant campaign of political maneuvering, Japanese officials and their U.S. lobbyists delayed the federal government's assessment and collection of penalties for seven more years. In March 1978, the Customs Service found that Japanese companies owed over $400 million in duties for televisions dumped in the U.S. The Treasury Department reduced the duties to $46 million, but only $16 million was ever collected.[13] It mattered little, as by the late 1970s Japanese firms had become dominant, and most U.S. TV producers had thrown in the towel.

During the seven-year delay, Japanese companies found a new way to dump and continued to sell TV sets to American retailers at below market value. As early as 1972, they implemented an elaborate scheme based on "double-invoicing" to continue to undercut U.S. producers. Investigative journalists, such as Jack Anderson and Seymour Hersh, exposed these "competition-destroying devices."[14] American retailers, such as Sears and Montgomery Ward, were issued standard invoices from Japanese companies. These high prices appeared on custom forms. However, Japanese companies then paid U.S. retail firms rebates for each of the imported sets. The rebates allowed U.S. retailers to sell imported television sets to American consumers at very low prices; some prices were below actual Japanese companies' production costs. After three grand jury investigations, Alexanders, Sears, and a number of other American retail chains admitted their participation in these schemes. Sears paid the largest fine, which was over $5 million.

Why did American politicians go along with Japan's coordinated attack on the U.S. TV industry? The answer is that Japanese "agents of influence" persuaded key Washington officials to limit the scope of unfair trade investigations, support Japanese appeals of dumping duty findings, and limit criminal investigations of Japanese corporate leaders.

Journalists cited a number of specific examples of such untoward influence peddling. David Macdonald worked for a law firm that represented Mitsubishi and other Japanese export companies. When he became Assistant Treasury Secretary in 1974, he ruled against imposing duties on Japanese electronic products. He returned to the same law firm after he left office. Harold Malmgren served as Deputy Special Trade Representative for Presidents Nixon and Ford. When he left government in the mid-1970s, he was hired to represent Hitachi, Mitsubishi, Sharp, Sanyo, and Toshiba. Soon thereafter, Malmgren worked effectively to reduce the proposed five-year Orderly Marketing Agreement (OMA) with Japanese TV producers to three years and to allow Japanese firms to exceed the OMA quota with TV sets produced by their U.S. subsidiaries. An undisclosed side agreement to the 1977 OMA was drafted by Shirley Coffield, a staff attorney in the Office of the Special Trade Representative. She was the wife of Daniel Minchew, who was at that time the Chairman of the International Trade Commission. Prior to heading the ITC, Minchew had worked for the United States-Japan Trade Council, which was a lobbying group funded by the Japanese embassy. Minchew, while still with the ITC, signed a contract to do consulting work for the Council upon his departure. He later pled guilty to felony charges related to illegal political practices.[15]

Macdonald, Malmgren, Coffield, and Minchew are but four specific examples of Japanese influence peddling in Washington. By the late 1980s, when the last of the cases against Japanese TV exporters had been closed, over twenty former government officials who had worked on the cases had been hired directly by Japanese companies or by law firms and lobbying organizations that represented them. According to one Zenith lawyer, this was "the largest and most heavily funded operation to purchase political influence by foreign interests in American history."[16]

The full story of the failure to collect meaningful anti-dumping duties, enforce fair trade legislation, and negotiate effective import reductions will never be known. However, there is a substantial body of solid evidence both of long-term illegal dumping of TV sets and of perfectly legal Japanese influence peddling in Washington. In 1965, every color TV sold in the United States was made by an American-owned company. Thirty years later, none were. And, throughout this period, the U.S. government supervised this decimation of the American color television industry. Missouri Senator Jack Danforth, Chairman of the Senate's Subcommittee on International Trade, summed up the government's inaction and its effects on the TV industry this way: "It's like a basketball game in which the referee never calls a foul," and only "one of the teams is voluntarily playing by the rules." The game was rigged, and Zenith could not have won.[17]

The decline of American TV manufacturing provides the background for the story of Springfield's TV plant, because it was during this period of increasing and often unfair international competition that the Zenith Corporation bucked industry trends by opening a new, sprawling television factory in southwest Missouri.

Zenith Corporation and Its Move to Springfield

In 1918, two wireless radio enthusiasts, R. H. G. Matthews and Karl Kassel, began to make radio equipment on their kitchen table to sell to other operators. In 1923, the founders incorporated their business as the Zenith Radio Corporation. The name was derived from the call letters, 9ZN, of the pair's amateur radio station. During the Depression and World War II, the company expanded into video receivers and developed a line of black-and-white televisions, which it began to sell in 1948. Zenith introduced its first color TV sets for consumers in 1961, and by the middle of that decade, the company was looking to increase its color TV production capacity.[18]

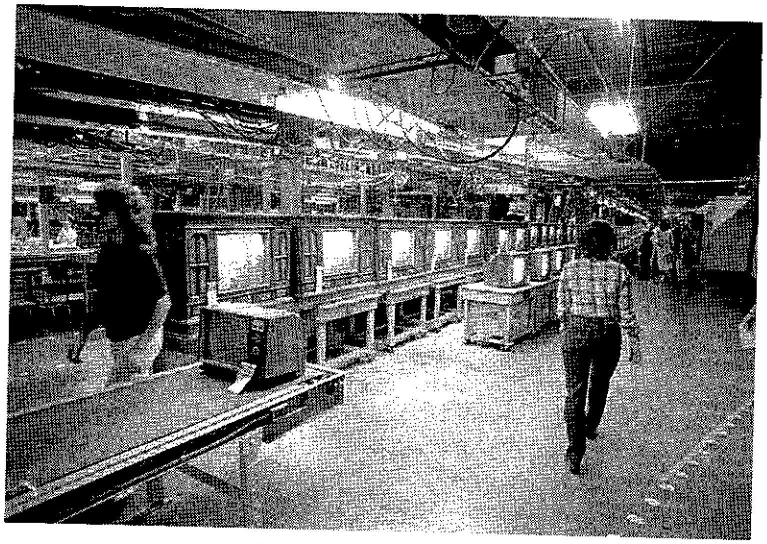
On December 15, 1966, Zenith made an "electrifying announcement" that it would open in Springfield its first final assembly facility located outside of Chicago. The company's slogan, "The Quality Goes In, Before the Name Goes On," represented its deep faith in American workers and American production technology, and Zenith managers were impressed with the work ethic of Ozarkers. As part of its efforts to recruit Zenith, in November 1966, Springfield Chamber of Commerce officials placed a phony "help wanted" ad in the local newspaper for light assembly workers. Starting pay was to be $1.60 per hour. While this wage was significantly

lower than Zenith workers in Chicago were paid, it was an attractive pay level in Springfield. Over 12,000 Ozarkers submitted their names. Local officials also touted the city's high school vocational and technical education system to assure Zenith managers that their labor requirements would readily be met. Along with low-cost land, subsidized city services, and assurances of future municipal bonds for expansions, Springfield leaders used the lure of low labor costs to woo Zenith to open the company's first TV production plant outside of the Chicago area.[19]

Preparations for the new plant began less than three weeks following the December 15, 1966, announcement. A team of Zenith technicians and Springfield teachers built a simulated TV assembly line at a downtown vocational-technical center. Graduates of that training soon were employed in a small production building on North Jefferson Avenue, and on March 13, 1967, the first TV component chassis rolled off the line at that temporary facility. Eight months later, on November 20, 1967, portions of the new plant on East Kearney Street were opened and production was shifted to the new facility. Initial operation proved successful, as Ozarks workers in the modern plant produced sets that exceeded the quality of those made in Chicago. In February 1968, just three months after startup, Zenith requested $7 million in municipal bonds to expand the original building. The bond measure, which was the last Springfield municipal bond put to a vote of the public, passed by a margin of four to one. By late 1969, just two years after it opened, the expanded plant was producing approximately 2,000 TV sets per day.[20]

Within weeks of the plant's opening, labor officials began a drive to unionize workers. Labor organizers claimed that Zenith had come to Springfield to avoid higher-wage unionized workers in Chicago; however, company officials denied this. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' (IBEW) organization campaign emphasized improved wages, benefits and job security for all workers. Further, special appeals were made to female employees with flyers that proclaimed that "over 300,000 women are members of the IBEW," and that "equal pay for equal work . . . is a fundamental principle of all IBEW contracts. Under our agreements . . . women earn the same rate as the IBEW men beside them. Contracts provide maternity leave and other special benefits for women." The organizing campaign was short and successful. The IBEW was certified on May 6, 1968 to represent production workers, and the first contract was signed on September 29 of that year. The contract set up an internal labor market with fifteen grades of jobs, within which workers could advance. Starting wages ranged from $2.00 to $3.60 per hour (an improvement over the $1.60 original starting pay), and benefits included one week of paid vacation, eight paid holidays, and a company-paid health insurance plan.[21]

Between the initial agreement in 1969 and the early 1980s, a succession of contracts brought small but consistent wage gains and improved



Inside the Zenith factory.
Courtesy of Bob Linder.

benefits, such as paid dental coverage, up to three weeks of paid vacation, cost-of-living adjustments, and profit-sharing and retirement plans. With the exception of one strike in 1974, the union and company had an unusually effective working relationship throughout the plant's twenty-nine years in Springfield. In a 1987 letter to union members, Zenith's CEO noted that "we have enjoyed almost twenty years of friendship and cooperation with the people of the Ozarks," and, after reflecting on the trials and tribulation of the TV industry, the local plant manager recalled that "through it all, we've had a great relationship and we have worked well together." A few years earlier, when workers had accepted a wage freeze, the IBEW local's president had described the relationship this way: "We don't agree on everything management wants, but we have learned to sit down together and work out our common problems. That's what collective bargaining is all about."[22]

The early to mid-1970s were the best of times for the Springfield plant and its workforce. In 1973, Zenith bucked industry trends in downsizing by expanding the Zenith facility for the second time. A national IBEW official described the company's commitment to America and American workers this way: "At a time when other American electronics firms, especially T.V. manufacturers, were fleeing the country like rats from a sinking ship, seeking cheap labor, Zenith stuck to its beliefs and expanded in this country."[23] The expansion swelled employment to over 5,000 people in the Springfield plant, and Zenith paychecks added over $40 million annually to the area income stream. In 1976, the southwest Missouri plant produced

six models, ranging from 19-inch portable countertop sets to massive 45-inch projection units. Together, these sets accounted for over half of all Zenith color TVs. With aggressive testing of sets as they proceeded down the assembly line, Zenith continued to lead the industry in reliability. A 1977 survey of TV repair companies showed that Zenith units needed the fewest repairs of all TV sets marketed in the United States.

The Beginning of the End for Zenith in Springfield

The string of good news for Springfield came to an end in the late 1970s. While Zenith Corporation as a whole remained marginally profitable, its color TV division barely broke even and in some years posted losses. The problem was that while Zenith sets still were number one in reliability, foreign-made sets had caught up on picture quality and their prices were significantly lower than Zenith's. As a Merrill Lynch industry analyst put it, "the difference between 'best' and 'worst' is so slight there's no longer a premium paid for quality."[24] With government assistance, Japanese firms, especially SONY, had pioneered the use of solid state circuitry in TVs. The picture quality of SONY's Trinitron sets rivaled or exceeded that of Zenith TVs. As its market share dwindled, Zenith undertook a two-fold survival strategy: corporate restructuring, and reliance on Mexican production.

In 1978, a sweeping reorganization began, and the company's structure was modified into four divisions along major product lines. In addition to the consumer electronics unit that was dominated by color TV, the company had three other divisions. Cable products included cable signal receivers, pay-for-view decoder boxes, teletext systems that displayed text as well as visual images on screen, and other products. Components and systems included color TV picture tubes, monochrome display devices, and power switches. In 1979, Zenith acquired the Heath Company and created a fourth division, Zenith Data Systems, which made personal computers. While these three other divisions proved profitable, Zenith had to do something to restore profitability in its core operation of color TV production: grudgingly, it began production outside the U.S.[25]

To shore up TV profits, in 1978 Zenith moved part of its chassis building, sub-component operation, and 1,000 Springfield jobs to a plant in Reynosa, Mexico. However, the Company remained committed to having final assembly and other operations performed in the U.S. In an expression of this commitment, Zenith built a plastic molding operation adjacent to the assembly plant in Springfield. The "plastics plant," as it became known, produced TV cabinets and small plastic parts. The overall result was that the Springfield facility grew much larger and overall employment held nearly steady. Still, according to one union official, the opening of the Reynosa plant was when "the nails on the coffin started."[26]

The early eighties were reasonably good years for Zenith and for the Springfield plant. The company as a whole showed a modest profit for all but one of the first five years of the eighties. In 1981, Zenith spent $21 million to add eight new production lines in Springfield and to modernize operations with "floating" assembly lines that allowed individual operators to pull sets up and off the line to be worked on individually: The float lines increased both productivity and quality. Overall, an additional 600,000 square feet were added to the southwest Missouri facility. At that time, the plant usually ran three shifts, and it produced several million sets per year. [27] What the company did with the opening of the plastics plant and expansion of assembly lines was to consolidate nearly all of its final production of color TVs in Springfield.

The news for Ozarks workers was not all good, however, as a looming loss for 1982 led the company to seek and to get a two-and-one-half year wage freeze from its IBEW employees. Hourly pay at the plant in 1982 ranged from $5.47 to $7.78 across sixteen labor grades. The wage freezes in Springfield and at other Zenith facilities helped restore corporate profitability for a few years, but the red ink began to pile up again soon. After 1984, Zenith posted a profit for only one year of the last decade of its existence as an independent company.

During 1985 and 1986, key developments occurred for both Zenith and the IBEW. The Company expanded its move into Mexico by scaling back production in Chicago and Springfield and transferring its first final assembly work to Mexico, as 13-inch sets began to be produced in Reynosa. It then closed its wood cabinet plant in Evansville, Indiana, and shifted that work to Mexico also. These were gut-wrenching steps taken by corporate executives who remained stubbornly committed to the U.S., and who were proud of being the lone American company left in the TV industry. As Zenith's CEO put it, "The Company's preference is clear. We want to keep these jobs in Springfield." These sentiments were echoed by Zenith's labor relations manager: "The Company wants Springfield and the U.S. in general. We want [the] U.S.A. because it's right for us and also morally right."[28]

Union leaders saw these job transfers as another nail in the coffin. The primary problem in workers' views was unfair competition from foreign, especially East Asian, firms. Their response to rising imports and American job losses was to have IBEW members become enthusiastic leaders in the nation-wide "Buy American Campaign." In early 1986, the President of Zenith's IBEW local helped establish an "Americans for America" committee. IBEW committee officers lined up six local manufacturing companies and several area unions as additional members, and they published editorials, ran advertisements, handed out leaflets at retail stores, and gave speeches to urge consumers to buy American-made products. Branson entertainer Roy Clark promoted the idea during his concerts, and other local celebrities and business leaders got behind the idea.

In addition, Zenith employees did more than talk about "buying American." A local newspaper reporter recorded the model of vehicles as workers left the Zenith parking lot after the day shift: over 90 percent of the vehicles were made by Ford, General Motors, or Chrysler. The reporter wrote, "I tip my hat to Zenith workers. They practice what they preach." And preach they did. One Springfield Americans-for-America newsletter proclaimed that "America is at war. . . . This war is not being fought with guns, bullets and bombs. The battle is fought with the dollars and cents in the pockets of every man, woman and child in the United States. When you enter a retail store and make a purchase you have become a soldier in that war."[29]

The Americans for America committee entered a float in the 1986 Springfield Christmas parade and it won second prize. But in what turned out to be an omen, the float had been assigned to the "fantasy division," for while surveys showed that many Americans were willing to spend a little more to buy American-made products, the movement never really got traction, and consumers soon lost interest in "buying American." Less than a year after Springfield's Zenith workers began their campaign, a headline in *U.S. News and World Report* declared that the "'Buy American' crusade struggles on," though "few positive results are noticeable."[30]

City and state government officials also refused to get on board. When Missouri Senate Bill No. 235 was presented that would require city, county, and state purchasing agents to buy products made in the United States so long as increased costs did not exceed 15 percent, the Springfield City Council passed a resolution opposing the bill because "it requires the City to search out suppliers of products made in the United States at increased cost to the City." [31] Although Springfield government officials did not embrace "Buy American" policies, they did support Zenith in late 1986 by expanding the city's enterprise zone to include the plant. This brought Zenith further tax abatements, utilities savings, and infrastructure subsidies.

Despite expanding operations in Mexico, a wage freeze, the "Buy American" campaign, and government financial support in Springfield and Chicago, Zenith lost a combined $17.7 million in 1985 and 1986. The Company had to do more to cut costs. So, in March 1987, Zenith reopened labor negotiations with the Springfield IBEW local. The Company's labor relations manager took a hard line: "Zenith has gone from bad to worse. We're trying to cut costs," and to "keep the work here, . . . we have to have a reduction in wages and salaries." The Company explained how much labor costs needed to drop and presented three packages of wage cutbacks that the union could use as models. Zenith did not care which package was used to draw down wages and salaries, but they would not budge on the necessity of pay concessions: "This is an either/or proposition. If you don't agree, we move. This is the amount. No negotiations. . . . If you turn down, we'll move Plastics Plant and TVs, [the] whole thing."[32] The Company did offer three important concessions to the union: salaried workers would take an equivalent pay cut, some production of 19-inch sets would return to Springfield from Mexico, and Zenith would guarantee that final TV assembly work of most sets 19 inches and larger would remain at the plant for the five-year duration of the contract.

Union leaders' hands were tied, and the bargaining committee decided on an across-the-board 8.1 percent wage reduction. These lower wages were then to be frozen for three years, with workers to receive slight raises in each of the last two years of the contract. The committee posted its views to the rank and file: "If we reject, . . . it will only be the beginning of the end to business as we know it in the Springfield area."[33] Almost 70 percent of workers voted to accept the contract. News of the revamped contract soon spread, and some analysts heralded the pacts as a "superb example of management and labor working together to keep jobs in the USA" and as a "working model" that might be used "throughout American industry in these times of intense pressure from low-wage foreign competition." Others were less impressed with the company's decision to commit to five more years in the TV industry. A *Business Week* story proclaimed that "Zenith is sticking its neck out in a cutthroat market."[34]

The contract brought temporary relief to Zenith and helped the company post a modest $12 million profit in 1988. However, by 1989 Zenith was in the red once more, and it never again posted a profit as an independent firm. The 1987 agreement also did not bring lasting tranquil labor relations. In quick succession, three disputes arose over the language of the work-guarantee clause. The union believed that all sets larger than 19 inches were to be produced in Springfield. However, Zenith began assembling its large projection TVs in Mexico one year after the agreement. Company officials pointed out that the contract guarantee covered only "sets with screen sizes of 19 inch and over—*utilizing a picture tube manufactured in the United States*" (emphasis in the original). Since projection tubes were made by a company in East Asia for Zenith, those sets were not covered by the work guarantee. Second, union leaders believed that development and production of Zenith's innovative Flat Tension Mask monitor would occur in Springfield. However, Zenith officials pointed out that "a monitor is not a television," and that production of the FTM monitor "was not part of the contract." Finally, union leaders wrote the company about the production of "Mexkits," which they considered an "operation for the purpose of installing the chassis and module boards in the cabinet." This qualified as "final assembly" work that they believed was guaranteed to stay in Springfield. Zenith officials responded that "the Mexkit program is a sub-assembly program" rather than "final assembly." In all three disputes, Zenith's interpretation of the contract won out.[35]

In the late 1980s, Zenith executives had a key decision to make. Top executives were told by some Wall Street analysts that they should sell their color television operations and focus on profitable computer and cable products sectors. Zenith's response to Wall Street was: "Give up? Absolutely not. All of us were born and bred in this business. We're committed to turning things around," and we're going to continue "battening down the hatches."[36]

To win the battle against foreign competition, Zenith managers intensified their efforts to lower production costs. IBEW workers in Illinois approved a 40 percent wage cut for new hires, and Zenith laid off or coaxed into early retirement over 500 of its white-collar employees. Still, the financial losses mounted.

In 1988, as Zenith's profits faltered, the IBEW looked into the possibility of buying the color TV division, including the Springfield plant, but the Company showed no interest in the idea. However, Zenith could not ignore two other suitors who made takeover bids for the entire company. In 1988, an internal takeover was initiated by Zenith's largest shareholder, the Brookhurst Partners, Ltd. Zenith's top managers and board of directors fought back, and the takeover effort fizzled out. Later, a New Jersey holding company, Nycor, Inc, launched a takeover bid. It too was defeated. Considerable funds and countless hours were used in these defensive maneuvers, which were resources that could have been used to bolster the company's fight against international competitors and its struggle to stay afloat in the color TV industry.

Even with the corporate hatches battened down, the Zenith ship continued to leak red ink, and the Company needed to raise cash. It did so soon after Christmas, 1989, when it sold its profitable personal computer division to a Paris-based company, Group Bull, for over $450 million. The Company invested some funds from the sale to speed development of flat tension mask monitors and high-definition TV technology. Unfortunately, neither of those innovations came on line fast enough to restore the company to profitability.[37]

By the beginning of the 1990s, as corporate losses surged to over $40 million per year, an air of resignation seemed to hang over managers and workers alike. As a top manager put it in a newspaper interview, "I hope that we start to win pretty soon because the next tightening of the belt is going to be really painful . . . . We deserve better than this. Our people deserve a lot better than this." And as Springfield union leaders realized that they had failed in their bid to either bring FTM production or more 19-inch set assembly to the Missouri plant, the local president lamented, "We have given you our best." They knew that their wage and benefit package of just over $11 per hour could not compete with the $1.50 per hour pay and benefit compensation paid to Mexican Zenith workers. As claims of unfair foreign competition fell on deaf ears in Washington, one national labor leader issued a frighteningly accurate prediction of the future of the U.S. color television industry: "The last significant segment of the consumer electronics industry left in the United States, this great industry which America created, nurtured and so generously gave to others, will disappear from our shores, perhaps forever." [38]

In July 1991, Springfield IBEW's business officer wrote to the company regarding rumors that the plant was to be shut down in March 1992, when the work guarantees in the 1987 contract expired. Zenith's Director of Industrial Relations wrote back that "we are still reviewing programs and modifying details in light of changing business conditions," and he promised that corporate plans for Springfield would be "solidified enough for discussion with your committee by the first of October."[39] After several delays, Zenith's plans for the Springfield plant were made public on October 29, 1991. The company statement read:

> In March 1987, the company made a strong commitment to Springfield. The company made that five-year commitment in good faith and with the sincere hope that industry conditions would improve. . . . In fact, price erosion has cost Zenith $500 million in lost revenue over the last five years. . . . After the current labor agreement expires next March, Zenith plans to phase-out the color television final assembly and plastic-cabinet finishing operations in Springfield and consolidate these operations in existing facilities in Mexico.[40]

The final nail in the coffin was being driven in.

Zenith's decline resulted both from the successful campaign of East Asian producers to corner the U.S. consumer electronics market (as described above) and from three questionable managerial decisions. First, when Japanese producers began to expand in the late 1950s, Zenith could have followed RCA's lead and established licensing agreements with Japanese firms to use Zenith components in the sets that they then exported to the U.S. The Company also could have signed joint production or marketing agreements with foreign firms once it became clear that Zenith could not swim against the tide of rising imports. Zenith officials, however, stubbornly refused to do any type of significant business with foreign competitors.

Second, Zenith managers did not capitalize on the booming cable products and personal computer markets. Instead, the Company sold its computer division in 1989, after only a decade of operation, and it later sold its cable products division. Both divisions had been profitable. If Zenith had committed more funds for research, development, and marketing of products in those divisions, then the company likely would have survived longer.

Finally, a decision to use the "instant on" technology in several sizes of TVs from the late 1970s to early 1980s undermined Zenith's claim to be the industry's leader in reliability. By the mid-1980s, Zenith was getting about two dozen complaints per year from consumers alleging that their sets were smoking or had caught fire. Newspaper stories ran nationwide in the late eighties claiming that faulty Zenith sets were to blame for as many as nineteen deaths.[41]

By failing to deal creatively with rising imports, selling rather than expanding profitable divisions, and surrendering its marketing advantage in reliability, Zenith executives contributed to the ultimate collapse of the company. Thus, it was a combination of an uneven and unfair competitive playing field and several managerial miscues that led to the demise of the last American-owned TV producer.

The Impacts of the Closing

Announcement of the closing was carried on the front page of the Springfield paper next morning and was featured prominently in Saint Louis and Kansas City papers the same day. As the story went out over the wire services, it was picked up by metropolitan papers across the country. Then, in May, 1992, ABC's news program "20/20" had a prolonged segment on the Zenith closing in Springfield. The shuttering of the last American-owned television factory was big news indeed. The shutdown had no discernible effect on the nation's economy. However, it had significant repercussions for the local economy, Zenith Corporation, and the people who had worked in the plant.

Springfield government officials discussed the closure in what appeared to be optimistic terms. As one political leader put it, "There's no question the short-term impact will be significant, . . . but we're not wringing our hands saying it's going to be the death of Springfield. In the long term, it won't be devastating." The president of the city's Chamber of Commerce agreed: "The phase-down is significant, but it will not cripple the area's economic stability." While city officials had economic models to predict the impact of both business startups and closures, they refused to run the model for the Zenith shutdown. The task of predicting the local economic fallout went to two Southwest Missouri State University economics professors. Their model predicted that the job cuts could cost Springfield $46 million per year.[42]

As it turned out, officials' predictions of no catastrophic long-term damage to the local economy proved accurate. Manufacturing employment did decline by over 1,500 jobs from 1991 to 1992. However, total employment in Greene County (which encompasses Springfield and some bordering communities) actually rose by over 2,500 workers during the same period. In 1991, Greene County total employment stood at just under 102,000 people, and the average annual pay for those jobs was $18,260.

Although manufacturing employment continued to decline after Zenith's closure (1999 industrial employment was 14 percent lower than in 1990), strong job growth in medical and business services, education, and other fields allowed Springfield's labor market to expand. When the last Zenith employees left the plant in 1996, Greene County's total employment stood at over 121,000 workers, and the inflation-adjusted average pay for those jobs had increased by $500 from 1991. Springfield's labor market then followed much the same trajectory as the nation's economy, which boomed over the final years of the twentieth century. By 1999, over 131,000 people held jobs in Greene County, and they received annual pay $1,500 higher than workers did in 1991.[43] The plant closure, however, was not associated with such sanguine developments for Zenith Corporation.

Zenith leaders were loath to move work outside of the U.S., but felt that they had no choice but to seek lower labor costs in their battle against foreign producers. As one company spokesman put it, "We want to keep as much employment in the United States as we can and keep as much in Missouri as we can. Unfortunately, we don't feel that we have any choice at this point. The only way to stay competitive is to reduce your costs." A vice-president of the consumer products division said this about the closure: "This has been a very difficult decision for the company. For twenty-five years, Zenith people in Springfield have played a major role in maintaining Zenith's excellent reputation as a quality leader in our intensely competitive industry. However, as painful as these moves are, further consolidation of operations is a necessary component of Zenith's programs to reduce costs and improve profitability." Zenith's top manager put it more succinctly: "Without the lower labor costs from those Mexican plants, Zenith would be out of business altogether."[44]

Although the transfer of jobs to Mexico was the cornerstone of Zenith's survival strategy, Zenith even shifted work among its plants in Mexico to squeeze out the most labor cost savings that it could get. In late 1992, the Company cut hundreds of jobs in Matamoras, where workers' pay averaged about $1.00 per hour, and shifted the work to plants in Reynosa and Chihuahua, where wages varied between 64 cents and 84 cents per hour. The movement of work to and then within Mexico, which one Zenith worker dubbed "playing Mexican roulette," ultimately failed to save the company. As record losses mounted in 1991, Zenith sought outside investors. The South Korean company Lucky-Goldstar (LG) paid $15 million for five percent of the company's stock. That was $10.34 per share, which was nearly 75 percent less than the $38 value of Zenith stock in the mid-1980s. In May, 1993, Zenith issued half a million new shares of stock, but institutional investors paid only $6.75 per share. In 1995, as its troubles mounted, Zenith sold an additional 53 percent of its stock to LG for $351 million. Zenith continued to exist as a company, but not as an American-owned company. Even that was not good enough to save the company. Early in 1999, with its stock trading for as little as 19 cents per share, Zenith was delisted from the New York Stock Exchange. Later that year, Zenith filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. It listed $310 million in assets and $732 million in debt. LG Electronics exchanged the $200 million that Zenith owed it for 100 percent ownership.[45] Zenith ceased to exist as a company, and it became merely a subsidiary of LG as purely a designer and marketer (not a manufacturer) of electronics products.

In Springfield, approximately 1,500 employees were given pink slips by Zenith between March 1991 and mid-1996, resulting in 1,500 different stories that could be told about the impacts of the plant shutdown on workers. Of all these, I can at least give the story of one family that endured probably the worst consequences of the shutdown; I shall then discuss the most common effects of job displacement on former Zenith workers as a whole.

Bob and Anita Mingus began working at the Zenith plant in the late 1960s and early 1970s, respectively. In 1978, Bob was elected as business representative for the IBEW local union, a position for which he was re-elected four times. Eventually, they became "a two-generation 'Zenith family,'" as three of their children joined them in the plant. Such families were fairly common. As the closure loomed, Bob, who was a Baptist minister, worried greatly about the future of his family and the 1,200 or more workers he represented. In early March 1992, weeks before the shutdown began, Bob Mingus died of a heart attack. His wife, Anita, asserted that "the extreme stress that he was under undoubtedly contributed to his death." Her family's grief soon was compounded by her and three of her children's subsequent job displacement. By September, her oldest son and daughter were having trouble paying for health insurance and making their mortgage payments, and the job loss had contributed to the divorce of another son. According to Anita, "other families are enduring similar, or worse hardships. Families have been broken up; the stress of less money and a lost job have resulted in many separations and divorces."[46] Fortunately, the tragedies of the Mingus family were not the norm. For most individuals and families, the plant closure was very difficult at first, but most eventually found new jobs (albeit often at lower pay) and got on with their lives. To gauge both the range and most typical impacts that the shutdown had on workers, two Southwest Missouri State University sociologists conducted interviews with and surveyed former Zenith workers in 1999 and 2000.[47]

About 90 percent of workers were unemployed after they left Zenith. The average length of joblessness was ten months. One reason for extended unemployment was that the majority of displaced workers took advantage of Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits offered by the federal government to workers who lost their job due to foreign competition. TAA paid eligible Zenith workers between $110 and $170 per week for up to one year and provided money for retraining or classroom education for up to two years. Several problems arose with the administration of TAA. First, the program seemed too complicated for some workers. Only a little over half of displaced workers took advantage of TAA for retraining or education. Second, many workers who did use TAA were shorted on their expected benefits. Most Zenith employees had been temporarily laid off prior to their final dismissal, and the government begins counting workers' eligibility for assistance from the first day of their layoff, whether temporary or not. This left many workers with fewer months of cash assistance and less money for education and training than they thought they would get. As one worker put it, "When I signed up, they said there would be enough funds there to get you through two years of school." Instead, his monthly benefits and tuition assistance ended after about 15 months. Frustrated with TAA, he commented: "Now here I am trying to better my education and be a more productive human being. Why can't they just say, 'This person is trying. Let's help him.'"[48] Survey data reveal that TAA participants found average pay and benefits on replacement jobs no better than those who found work on their own. So, while some Zenith workers were aided by TAA, the government assistance program was hardly a success overall.

Once the former Zenith workers found new jobs, over 70 percent reported that they were not doing manufacturing production work. On the positive side, workers reported little difference in work conditions and job satisfaction between their new job and the one they had held at Zenith. However, average inflation-adjusted earnings were 10 percent lower than at Zenith, and two-thirds reported fewer benefits from their replacement job than Zenith had provided. Fewer workers were covered by a pension or profit-sharing plan, health insurance coverage declined, and average days of paid vacation shrank by half.

Most workers had to tighten their belts while they were unemployed and after taking lower-paying replacement jobs. Three-fourths cut back on purchases following the plant shutdown, but reduced spending was not enough to make ends meet for most families. One in six had sold or pawned items to raise cash, 20 percent had borrowed money, one-third had used credit cards more than usual, half had postponed non-emergency medical or dental treatments, and 55 percent drew more heavily from savings to make ends meet in the months after the closure. The short-term financial costs of the plant closure clearly were significant for Zenith workers.

Despite the claims that many families were torn apart as a consequence of job displacement, only one quarter of surveyed workers reported worsened family relationships following job loss. However, four in ten said that losing the factory job had weakened their relationships with friends. This probably occurred because many of their friends had been Zenith co-workers.

Some employees experienced more stress after the layoff, but about as many said that they actually were less stressed once the weight of the rumored shutdown was finally lifted from their shoulders. Overall, one quarter felt that job displacement had caused them some physical health problems, and over half believed that it had harmed their mental and emotional health.

When the plant closed, workers were angry and confused, and they didn't know who precisely was to blame for their predicament. A small minority blamed Mexican workers who worked for low wages, but most did not hold this view. Some were angry with the company. A few wore T-shirts proclaiming that "Zenith loves me this I know, they sent my job to Mexico." Other disgruntled employees posted a mock notice inside the plant on the subject of Zenith's Special High Intensity Training: "We are giving our employees more S.H.I.T. than any other company in the business," as "all our supervisors are particularly qualified to see that you get all the S.H.I.T. that you can handle."

However, most felt that the company had done all that it could, and they held minimal animosity toward Zenith. Soon after hearing the news of the impending closure, a plastics plant employee noted that "it's a pretty depressing feeling,[but] most aren't mad at Zenith. The company doesn't have any choice." Another worker simply said: "We don't begrudge Zenith for trying to survive." A third summed up a common view toward the company: "Zenith stuck it out longer than most. They tried to fight the [political] system, but the system was stacked against them."

The federal government received the lion's share of blame from Zenith workers. One man explained that "most of us blame the government. If they would do what they're supposed to do at the borders and enforce the trade laws we now have, then we wouldn't be losing these jobs." Other comments included that "the government cares nothing about American workers," our "goddamn tax dollars go to support NAFTA," "the government didn't control the inflow of foreign products," "the government wouldn't limit Japanese dumping," and "the government used my taxes to encourage Zenith to move."[49]

Most workers let go by Zenith between 1992 and 1996 had worked for the company for well over a decade, and it is difficult to summarize the many ways that losing such a job affected over 1,500 people. However, several things are clear. First, the economic impacts were significant and long lasting. Given the high rate of initial unemployment, the average decline in wages and benefits on replacement jobs, and the many measures that people used to reduce spending and raise much-needed cash, it is clear that the shutdown caused serious short-term economic hardships. When surveyed four to seven years after they were displaced, a majority reported that their standard of living still was lower than it had been when they worked for Zenith. Losing their television production job clearly was a major financial disruption in workers' lifetime earnings patterns. Second, although few divorces are known to be linked directly to the closure, one in four workers experienced strained relationships with family, and 40 percent had fewer contacts with friends after they had been let go. The plant closing did disrupt the social relations for some former Zenith workers. Finally, while deaths related to the closure were extremely rare, significant numbers of workers felt that job loss had adversely affected their physical or mental health. Clearly, the shutdown was a troubling event for most displaced workers.

Overall, then, in addition to causing a sustained sag in their standard of living, the plant closure was associated with a declining quality of life for a number of former Zenith employees. Nonetheless, most settled into new jobs and got on with their lives. The factory shutdown was a negative short-term event for many people; it was not a long-term catastrophe for most former Zenith workers.

The thirty-year stay of Zenith Corporation in Southwest Missouri is a fascinating tale of a stubborn, yet ultimately unsuccessful corporate giant that bucked industry trends by staying in the consumer electronics field longer than any other company. It is a frustrating story of an indifferent federal government that stood on the sidelines as Asian industrialists and their political allies rigged the game of foreign competition. And it is the poignant account of how working in and then being displaced from Springfield's largest factory affected the lives of thousands of hard-working Ozarkers. The community's economy withstood the blow of the shutdown, and life has gone on for former employees. Still, few if any economic enterprises before or since have touched the lives of more Ozarks residents than the last U.S.-owned television plant on American soil.

Notes

1 A mixed-methods research strategy was used to collect the varied data needed to tell this history. Previously published materials on the television industry were reviewed, former Zenith workers interviewed, displaced Zenith workers surveyed, and documents analyzed from the Ozarks Labor Union Archives of Missouri State University Special Collections and Archives (hereafter MSUSCA). Unless otherwise noted, materials cited below come from boxed items in the Workers Local 1453 Collection (hereafter IBEW Collection), MSUSCA.

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3 "A Future Out of Focus: Workers at Zenith Plant Adjust to Job Loss," *The Kansas City Star*, March 28, 1992, Box 8, IBEW Collection.

4 County Business Patterns—Missouri, separate years from 1990 to 1999 (Washington, DC: United States Printing Office).

5 Bob Gerson, "Farnsworth Film to show dark chapter of RCA," *This Week in Consumer Electronics*, November 22, 2004. Accessed June 11, 2007 from Ebsco-Host; Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO, "Report on the color television industry," June 3-4, 1993, Box 6, IBEW Collection.

6 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment, Hours and Earnings United States, 1909-94" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 362-364. There was no separate Standard Industrial Classification for television workers in the 1950s and early 1960s, so the larger category of "home audio and video" employees is utilized. By the 1960s, the U.S. radio production industry had declined sharply, so the vast majority of those employees worked to produce TVs.

7 Industrial Union Department AFL-CIO, "Report on," 7; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment," 363-364; Pat Choate, *Agents of Influence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 77.

8 Martin Rosenberg, "Government Bungled Effort for TV Makers," *Kansas City Star*, March 28, 1992, Box 5, IBEW Collection; Industrial Union Department "Report on."

9 "Japan Bashes U.S. Again," *Springfield News-Leader*, February 4, 1992, Box 5, IBEW Collection.

10 Joseph S. Wright "Remarks before the town hall of California, Orange County Forum," 1972, Box 5, IBEW Collection; Industrial Union Department, "Report on," 7.

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12 Choate, *Agents*, 81.

13 Philip J. Curtis, *The Fall of the U.S. Consumer Electronics Industry* (Westport, CT: Quorum, 1994), 131.

14 Seymour Hersh, "Inquiry Told of Customs Fraud in Imports of Japanese TV Sets," *The New York Times*, January 24, 1979, Box 5, IBEW Collection; Jack Anderson, "A slap on the wrist," *Washington Post*, June 16, 1980, Box 5, IBEW Collection.

15 Choate, *Agents*.

16 Jack Anderson, "Officials linked to TV firms," Box 5, IBEW Collection; Choate, *Agents*, 87-88; "Appendix VII of Zenith's Petition," 311.

17 Donald Bartlett and James Steel, *America: What Went Wrong* (Kansas City KS: Andrews and McMeel, 1991), 5; "Danforth, John," Box 6, IBEW Collection.

18 "About Zenith: Corporate History," accessed June 13, 2007, http://www.zenith.com/sub-about/about-corp-history.html.

19 "Springfield of the Ozarks: Zenith Radio Corporation."

20 "Making America Competitive: Corporate Success Formulas," The Bureau of National Affairs, 1987, Box 7, IBEW Collection.

21 "IBEW Scrapbook," Box 4, IBEW Collection; "1968-69 Agreement," Box 2, IBEW Collection.

22 "March 19, 1987 letter to all Zenith-Springfield members of the IBEW," Box 6, IBEW Collection; "March 20, 1987 letter to Springfield Zenith IBEW employees," Box 6, IBEW Collection; "Showing the world how to make color TVs in the Ozarks," Box 4, IBEW Collection.

23 "Written by Bob Gault for National IBEW Magazine," Box 5, IBEW Collection; Judson Howell, "Springfield's Embattled Giant," *Springfield!*, March 1986, 58; "Showing the world how," Box 4, IBEW Collection.

24 "Zenith Finds, Quality Can't Assure Profits," *The Kansas City Times*, November 26, 1982, Box 5, IBEW Collection.

25 "Zenith Electronics Corporation—Company History," https://fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Zenith-Electronics-Corporation.com; "Zenith Annual Report," 1983, Box 3, IBEW Collection.

26 John Piene, "U.S. trade policies steal Zenith jobs," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

27 "Springfield's Embattled Giant"; "Annual Reports" for various years, Boxes 5 and 6, IBEW Collection.

28 "March 19, 1987 letter," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "1987 Contract negotiation notes," Box 4, IBEW Collection.

29 "Clippings," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

30 "Americans for America," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

31 "Council Bill No. 85-149," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "Americans for America," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

32 "March 4, 1987 contract negotiation notes," Box 4, IBEW Collection; "Summary sheet given to members," Box 4, IBEW Collection.

33 "Zenith Union Takes Pay Cut," *This Week in Consumer Electronics*, March 30, 1987, Box 4, IBEW Collection.

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35 "May 23, 1988 memo from John Carlson to the Labor-Management Working Conditions Committee," Box 5, IBEW Collection; notes from a "Meeting with corporate 2-20-90," Box 4, IBEW Collection.

36 "Zenith tries to keep from fading out," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

37 "Zenith falls from summit to profit nadir," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "Zenith news release: Zenith reports 1989 results from continuing operations," Box 4, IBEW Collection.

38 Notes from a "Meeting with corporate"; "Written by Bob Gault."

39 "August 2, 1991 letter to Robert Mingus from James Vito," Box 6, IBEW Collection.

40 "October 29, 1991 letter to Zenith employees from Vincent Kamler," Box 6, IBEW Collection.

41 "Zenith TVs Suspected in Fatal Fires," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, April 21, 1991, Box 5, IBEW Collection.

42 "Zenith workers focus on the future," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "Gephardt raps administration on state's loss of Zenith jobs," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "Zenith cuts could cost $46 million," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

43 Employment and pay levels are from "County Business Patterns—Missouri." Average pay per job is calculated by dividing total annual payroll by total employment. Inflation-adjusted changes in payroll across years are determined by using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers.

44 "Laid-off Zenith assembly line workers," Box 5, IBEW Collection; October 29, 1991 memo, "Dear Zenith-Springfield employees" from Vincent Kamler, Box 6, IBEW Collection; March 5, 1987 memo "To: All Zenith-Springfield people," from Jerry Pearlman, Box 4, IBEW Collection.

45 "Statement of Mexican Zenith workers before the Job Council of the Ozarks," December 12, 1992, Box 8, IBEW Collection; "Mexican labor, Environment," Box 8, IBEW Collection; "About Zenith: Corporate History"; "Zenith Electronics Corporation—Company History."

46 "American Jobs by Anita Mingus," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "Testimony of Anita Mingus before the Subcommittee on Labor of the U.S. Senate," Box 5, IBEW Collection.

47 Unless otherwise cited, all specific information and quotations in this section come from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 21 former Zenith employees, and information collected from a survey of 166 displaced Zenith workers. See Tim Knapp and John Harms, "When the Screen Goes Blank."

48 Peter Kilborn, "After Jobs Went South: A Town Finds Pitfalls in Retraining Effort," *New York Times*, November 6, 1993, Lexis-Nexis.

49 Ken Baake, "Zenith to Add Jobs in Juarez," *El Paso Herald-Post*, October 30, 1991; "Operations Bulletin," Box 6, IBEW Collection; "Zenith: From page one," Box 5, IBEW Collection; "Where have all the jobs gone," Box 3, IBEW Collection; "Laid-off Zenith assembly line workers"; the last five comments are from an open-ended survey question about who is responsible for the plant closing.