

Hurtig's new book explores the truth behind Free Trade

by Ira Nayman

book
The Betrayal of Canada
 written by Mel Hurtig
 published by Stoddart Publishing
 366 pages, \$24.95

There were 87,000 jobs created in Canada in 1987; 162,00 were created in 1989, the first year of free trade; 89,000 were lost in 1990, the second year of free trade. From February 1990 to February 1991, 430,000 full time jobs were lost and 384,000 people joined the unemployment rolls.

Still believe free trade is going to create "jobs, jobs, jobs?"

In non-financial industries, Canada allows over 30% foreign ownership; by comparison, the European Community allows about 8%, the United States about 5%, Japan around 3%. Since the Conservatives were first elected, US firms have invested \$1.133 billion dollars in Canada; the profits Americans have made directly and in the increased value of their investments in Canada was \$56.255 billion.

Still believe American investment benefits the country?

Mel Hurtig seems to have replaced Karl Marx as the man everybody talks about but nobody has read. As one might expect, the reaction to his current book, *The Betrayal of Canada*, from the pro-business press has been superficial and fatuous; they're so unused to credible, intelligent opposition, they don't know how to respond to it.

In his book, Hurtig argues that the Canadian economy has been deteriorating for years, and that the Free Trade Agreement has not only accelerated the problem, but left the Canadian government without the tools to solve it. Furthermore, the current Recession Canada is undergoing is a direct result of the Mulroney government's economic policies.

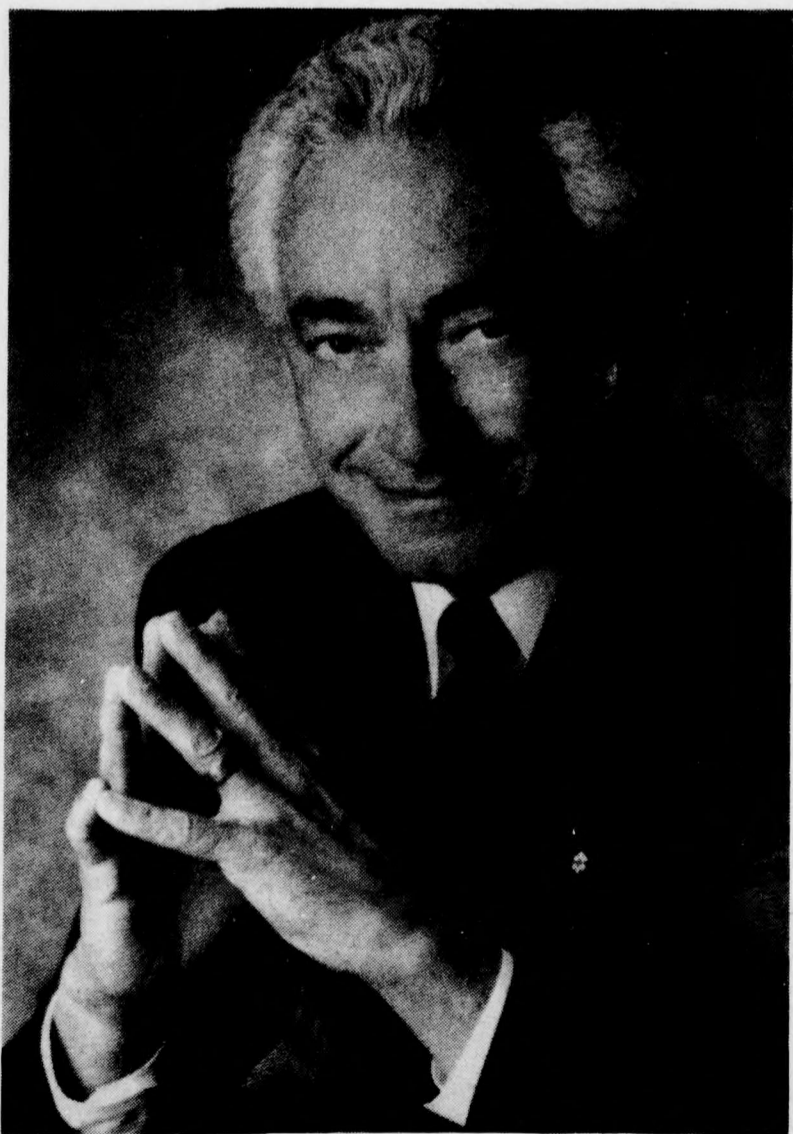
"Brian Mulroney and his government have betrayed Canada and have even betrayed the historic principles of their own party," with their economic policies, Hurtig writes.

Many of Hurtig's arguments will be familiar to those (few) of us who opposed the FTA: jobs are lost as transnational corporations switch production to other countries; pressure to cut social programs has come from the business community; corporate advertising, including substantial advertising from American subsidiaries, bought the last federal election for the Conservative Party. But, even those familiar with the arguments will be shocked by the depth of Canada's economic problems.

Hurtig supports his argument with a great deal of economic information; the first half of the book is filled with charts and statistics which seem to prove that Canada is an economic basket case. Although alternate theories to explain his facts are possible, I have yet to see a credible one.

The current fashionable response to Hurtig is that he has merely detailed a Recession that would have happened with or without Free Trade. This seems to me like saying somebody has drowned because water is wet; it may be true, but it hasn't explained a causal relationship.

Hurtig is a strident writer, whose flights of rhetoric frequently undermine the reader's sympathy to his cause. There is a smugness to his writing, as if the fact that Canada's destruction is good if it proves his opposition to the FTA was correct. Smugness is the occupational hazard of curmudgeons, as a look at Mordecai Richler or W. P. Kinsella will show. These stylistic problems aside, *The Betrayal of Canada* is essential reading for everybody who loves Canada and fears for the country's future.



Okay, his rhetoric sometimes gets the better of him and his smugness about the state of the country is unbecoming. But, in *The Betrayal of Canada*, Mel Hurtig has an important message for the country.

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