

Taking Trade to the Streets: The Lost History of Public Efforts to Shape Globalization. *By Susan Ariel Aaronson*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. 248 pp. Tables, index. Cloth, \$29.95; paper, \$19.95. ISBN: cloth 0-472-11212-0; paper 0-472-08867-X.

Reviewed by Alan M. Rugman

Susan Ariel Aronson delves into the attitudes of antiglobalization activists, especially their criticisms of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the philosophy of free trade. Several different types of trade critics are identified, ranging from left-wing activist groups like Greenpeace and Ralph Nader's organization to right wingers like Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot. Unions, economic nationalists, and protectionists are along for the ride.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 (of seven) are scholarly and reasonably accurate descriptions of the history of U.S. trade policy. Chapter 2 deals with U.S. protectionism, starting with the Boston Tea Party and ending with the Smoot–Hawley tariff. It then goes on to outline the period of trade liberalization that occurred in the 1930s, which was followed by postwar institutions like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Chapter 3 discusses GATT and the business-led agenda of tariff cuts and deregulation. Chapter 4 covers strategic trade policy, competitiveness, and the new U.S. protectionism as it evolved in the 1980s. Each of these three chapters offers a standard neoliberal perspective on trade liberalization, although obvious gaps in economic insight become apparent, as, for example, in the discussion of strategic trade policy that omits the special limiting conditions of this inefficient and misconceived protectionist public policy.

The remaining four chapters describe the agendas of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the trade arena. Chapter 5 discusses the Canadian and U.S. NGOs' opposition to NAFTA, and Chapter 6, the food safety, environmental, and labor-standards disputes at the WTO. Chapter 1 offers an introduction and Chapter 7 a conclusion to the theme that NGOs are important new actors that have prodded U.S. trade policy to move toward protectionism, although Aaronson notes that not all NGOs favor protection. This group of chapters appears to have been tacked on to the previous, mainly scholarly, study to "tart up" the book and add spice to the pedestrian discussion of U.S. trade policy that constitutes the core of the book.

The author has worked hard to give the NGO chapters a scholarly appearance; there are well over 100 footnotes per chapter, although the majority are from NGO and journalistic sources, rather than from the academic, government, and policy sources that document the more carefully

written chapters. Unfortunately, serious readers will quickly see that the reporting of the NGO case amounts to an unbalanced attack on free trade, globalization, multinationals, and capitalism. One-sided statements by NGOs about globalization and trade policy are reported uncritically in these four chapters. The author reports only one side of the current debates and does not present alternative viewpoints and countervailing evidence. As an example, consider Chapter 5. The first half is about the Canadian left-wing, economic-nationalist, NGO-led opposition to the Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreements of 1989 and to the subsequent passage of NAFTA. The author reports in detail on the musings of Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians, a nationalist group that organized a coalition of radical NGOs and unions to run against NAFTA in the 1993 federal election in Canada, in which they won less than 3 percent of the popular vote. It could be said that this anticapitalist coalition is of marginal interest and that it had a trivial impact on mainstream economic policy in Canada. The second half of the chapter describes the subsequent opposition to NAFTA in the United States, without once considering any of the undoubted economic and political advantages of the agreement that led to its adoption by the U.S. Congress in 1993. As only criticisms of NAFTA are documented, the result is an irrelevant caricature of the agreement.

Moreover, Aaronson displays an outdated American-centric attitude, as evidenced by her claim that “globalization can be defined as the growing social, political and economic integration of the United States with other nations of the world” (p. xiv). This will not go down well in Europe or Asia, since the United States is home to only 185 of the world’s top 500 multinationals. Further, she offers no informed insight about the often eccentric ideas of the NGOs she reviews in such detail, nor does she provide an analytical framework to make sense of them. What purports to be a book about business history offers little about business, although it does present a history of the marginalized NGOs who command a trivial percentage of the popular vote in Canadian and U.S. elections. The author needs to broaden her horizons and examine business and government as closely as she has the antiglobalization NGOs.

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