

The Politics of Canadian-Japanese Economic Relations 1952-1983, by Frank Langdon. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984. Pp. xiii, 194. \$18.95.

Never has so much been written by so many who know so little as in the case of Canada's future relationship with Japan. For all those weary of the endless lectures on the Japanese art of management or on the golden prospects awaiting Canadian businessmen once they fathom the inscrutable ways of the Japanese economy, this sensible book offers much relief.

Frank Langdon of the University of British Columbia is one of the handful of Canadian academics who has paid detailed attention to Japan over a long period. His assessment of Canadian-Japanese economic relations in the past tends to stress how often grand schemes have faltered and how advances have been the result of unspectacular diligence. The Trudeau government's attempt to sell Canadian manufactured and "high tech" goods to the Japanese was accompanied by much sound and flourish, but it signified very little, except, perhaps, that government's desperate attempt to be seen as independent of the United States and the Prime Minister's taste for eastern philosophy and food. Yet, as Langdon points out, "those officials who had the necessary vision and expertise had little impact on policy, nor could they keep the attention of the prime minister and the cabinet which was constantly pre-occupied with the non-economic side of domestic politics or the more glamorous aspects of international politics." As a result, the officials who carefully nurtured the Japanese-Canadian economic relationship were too often caught short by abrupt policy shifts as in the case of textile protection or, more strikingly, in the case of the 1977 embargo on uranium sales. The embargo caused the Japanese, who had bought increasingly greater quantities of Canada's uranium, to seek out other more reliable suppliers.

Professor Langdon is cautiously optimistic about the future, but he warns that inflated hopes in the past have been destructive when they were not fulfilled. Canadian manufacturers probably will continue to find Japanese terrain infertile. In other areas, especially joint ventures, the chances for success may be greater. Professor Langdon is surprisingly silent about agriculture, which has been an important area. While it is true that a recent Institute for Research on Public Policy monograph deals with the subject, more detail in any study of Canadian-Japanese economic relations does seem appropriate. In any case, there is more coverage of agriculture than is listed in the disappointing index.

Professor Langdon's speculations about the motives of Canadian politicians may not always be valid. Yet one finishes this book appreciating that very few Canadians — or Japanese — are so knowledgeable about Canadian-Japanese relations and suspecting that, in most cases, Professor Langdon has got the story right.

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