



THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS: 20 YEARS OF ACTION

Since 1985, the Council of Canadians has worked to uphold Canadian sovereignty and democracy, promoting economic justice in an inter-dependent world. Here are some of the highlights of our work over the last 20 years.

1985

On March 11, the Council of Canadians is founded, with the goals of “a new and better Canada with more and better jobs for Canadians, a higher standard of living for Canadians, and a sovereign Canada that plays an important role among the world community of nations.” Within a year, its membership grows to 3,000.



Maude Barlow with Mel Hurtig, first chairperson of The Council of Canadians

1986

The Council establishes itself as a voice for economic sovereignty, organizing protests over the sale of Canadian enterprises to offshore interests – de Havilland

to Boeing, Prentice Hall to Gulf & Western, and West Kootenay Power and Light to Utilicorp of Kansas.

1987

The Council organizes a “Canada Summit” to coincide with U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s visit to Ottawa. The Pro-Canada Network (later the Action Canada Network) is created and its members tape the Canada Summit Declaration to the front door of Parliament Hill’s Centre Block.

1988

Newly elected Council chairperson Maude Barlow, along with Canadian Auto Workers’ president Bob White, debate free trade with Alberta premier Peter Lougheed and corporate lobbyist Tom d’Aquino on national television. While Lougheed and d’Aquino speak in generalities, White and Barlow focus on the technicalities and the destructive nature of the agreement.

The Council fights the Mulroney government at every step in their plan to strip the National Energy Board of its powers to protect Canada’s energy security. The Council raises public awareness and debate on the issue, but loses the fight. The chairman of the NEB later states, “Now is not the time for energy nationalism. The NEB has become an agency that helps the market work.”

1989

The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement comes into effect on January 1. Six months later, the Council releases a “Report Card” on the deal, stating that despite government promises to the contrary, more than 33,000 jobs have already been lost due to free trade.