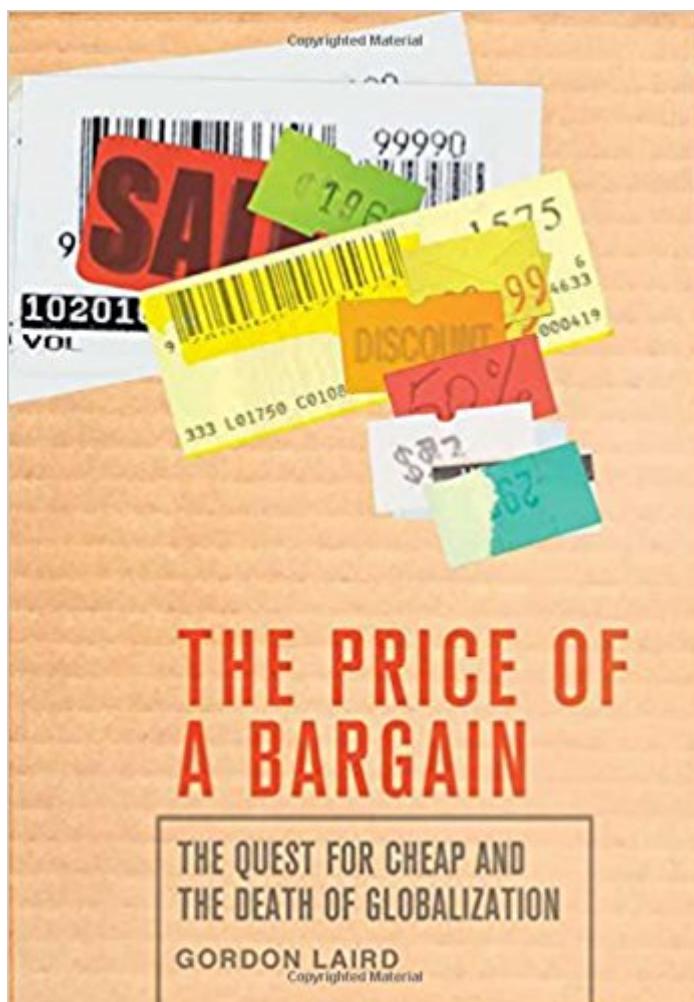


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# The Price Of A Bargain: The Quest For Cheap And The Death Of Globalization



## Synopsis

In this book, Laird traces the bargain — that touchstone of American culture — from its humble dollar-store origins to its recent role as global juggernaut. Along the way, he discovers that much of today's collapsing consumer economy is dangerously dependant upon unsustainable labor, transport, resources, trade imbalances, and consumer debt. Through interviews with everyone from box store executives to illegal immigrants, a single question emerges: Is the Wal-Mart culture sustainable on a global level? From Asia's factory borderlands to rural Mexico, from Las Vegas to the Arctic Circle, Laird explores the hidden revolution of discounting, and the promise and consequence of everyday low prices.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Laird deserves props for taking on the Big Box bastards. When you walk into that Wal-Mart Church of the Holy Cheap, nothing on the incredible \$15 price-tag tells you the sneakers were made with the blood of a Guangdong union organizer. In grab-you-by-the-lapels stories, Laird tells you the real cost of your got-it-for-nothing storegasm.” Greg Palast, The New York Times bestselling author of *The Best Money Democracy Can Buy* “In this gritty and entertaining look at our modern love affair with global bargains and Las Vegas sleaze, Gordon Laird brilliantly adds up the real cost of shopping at big boxes for disposable stuff. And it's a discounted hell of cheap wages, poisonous landscapes, toxic toys, and insecure markets. Consumers have unwittingly made a gambler's economy that is now trying to outsource its own moral reckoning.” Andrew Nikiforuk, author of *Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent*, and winner

of the 2009 Rachel Carson Environment Book Award. "Gordon Laird is a reporter of rare skill and extraordinary thoughtfulness, and he has fixed his keen eye on one of the most crucial questions of this young, tumultuous century: the true cost of things. Making those calculations is the essential first step in learning to live within our means" and the planet's "and The Price of a Bargain has provided us with an invaluable primer on how to do the math accurately." • "Chris Turner, author of *The Geography of Hope: A Tour of the World We Need*" "A provocative, well-researched, and illuminating tour of the forces shaping our consumer culture. . . . At its core, *The Price of a Bargain* is about sustainability. Our modern economic practices have created massive amounts of waste" both human and environmental "by externalizing the true costs of things. As the U.S. economy shifted from manufacturing to consumption, the quantity of things around us grew dramatically, but our wages began to fall. Bargains provided an illusion that our standard of living was keeping pace. Laird makes a strong case that illusion is over for good." • "Frank Marquardt, *Triple Pundit*

Gordon Laird is a journalist who has been featured on CNN and NPR, and in Mother Jones, among many others, and has been a features writer for the Far Eastern Economic Review. Winner of several Canadian National Magazine Awards and named "one of the best and best-informed minds in the world" by The Globe and Mail, Laird is Media Fellow emeritus at the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership. He lives in Calgary.

The Price of a Bargain goes deep into a subject many people probably don't think anything about. Most people probably think that a bargain is always a good thing, but as Laird points out with great detail and well researched reporting, a bargain may not always be good for everyone. The rise of globalization, big box stores like Wal-Mart and Home Depot, and the interdependence of the global supply-chain have all made the world very unstable. All of these recent developments depend on cheap energy supplies to fuel the container ships that drive the globalized delivery system. They also rely on a huge supply of cheap labor. With the rise of oil prices around the world and the rising wages of Chinese workers, both of these defining assumptions are coming to an end and the implications for a consumer driven world may be catastrophic. Laird's approach is sometimes long-winded, but he focuses on the true price of a bargain by coming at the issue from many different angles. In the end, The Price of a Bargain makes a convincing case that in today's economy, we are not actually paying the true cost of what we buy. Pollution, climate change, health issues, labor unrest - all of these costs are not being reflected in the price we pay for flat-panel TV's,

plastic toys, and cheap clothing shipped to us from the other side of the world. The Price of a Bargain is a wake-up call. I highly recommend you heed the buzzer and not just hit the snooze button as we have been doing for so long.

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