Power Play

The fight for control of the world's electricity

by Sharon Beder

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'A rip-roaring tale.' (The Sun-Herald)

'Lucidly written, strongly argued, highly informative and deeply alarming.' (Los Angeles Times)

Description

Contents

Introduction

Part 1: Power politics in the US before deregulation

1. Utility Agenda Setting 1900-1925
   The challenge of public power
   Political strategies
   Regulated monopolies
   Holding companies

2. Power Propaganda between the Wars
   Third parties
   The media
   Education
   Friends and allies

3. Struggles for Control before WWII
   Public utilities
   Californian fight
   Giant power in Pennsylvania
   Rise and stumble of the holding companies
   The Edison Electric Institute

4. Ongoing Propaganda After the War
   Utility economics
   Cold War politics
   Utilities in trouble
   The Coming of the Environmentalists
Part 2: The US deregulates and markets rule

5. Driving Deregulation
   - Vested interests
   - Ideological support
   - California

6. Deregulation in California
   - The power exchange
   - Withholding supplies
   - Other strategies for manipulating prices
   - The power companies
   - Bailout blackmail

7. Federal Politics
   - Bush Administration
   - Other states
   - Ownership issues
   - The Official explanation

8. Enron on the Rise
   - Enron services
   - Political ties
   - Enron and the environmental lobby
   - Globalisation Enron-style

9. Enron in Trouble
   - Enron accounting tricks
   - Conflicts of interest
   - Enron on the skids
   - Enron not unique

Part 3: The British Experiment

10. Electricity Supply 1900-1980
    - Municipal vs Private Control
    - Legislative Reforms
    - Nationalisation

11. The Ideology and Rhetoric of Privatisation
    - Think tanks and the rise of Thatcher
    - Privatisation
    - Privatisation of electricity

12. Privatisation in Practice
    - The power pool
    - Mergers and acquisitions
    - Technological change

Part 4: Australia: A Dedicated Follower of Fashion

13. Privatisation in Victoria
    - Business Groups and Think Tanks
    - Project Victoria
    - Electricity Privatisation
    - Privatisation In Practice

14. The National Electricity Market
    - National Market
    - Manipulation South Australia
    - Consequences in South Australia

15. Australia-Wide Deregulation
    - New South Wales
    - Other States
    - Winners and Losers

Part 5: Free Markets to Far Flung Corners

16. International Pressure to Privatise
    - The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
    - Development Banks and Foreign Aid
    - Who Benefits?

17. Independent Power Producers
    - Banks and Credit Agencies
    - Risk
Capital market liberalisation

18. **Enron in India**
   Terms of agreement
   American influence
   The end of Dabhol?

19. **Brazil Privatisation**
   Lack of new generating capacity
   Energy Crisis

**Conclusion: The Great Electric Confidence Trick**

Noted author Sharon Beder argues persuasively that the track record of electricity privatisation and deregulation around the world indicates that it is a confidence trick. Her book shows how simplistic ideology and economic theory have been used to mask the pursuit of self-interest; how control of electricity has been wrested from public hands to create profit opportunities for investors and multinational corporations; and how an essential public service has been turned into a speculative commodity in the name of ‘reform’.

Power Play explores the battles between private and public ownership in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia since the early twentieth century, and the agenda-setting and public relations strategies involved. It investigates the way that developing countries such as Brazil and India have been forced to allow foreign investors to exercise a stranglehold over their electricity systems. And it uncovers the campaigns waged by think tanks, corporate interests, and multinational companies such as Enron to swindle the public in dozens of countries out of rightful control over an essential public service.

**Author**
Dr. Sharon Beder has written 9 books, around 140 articles, book chapters and conference papers, as well as educational monographs, consultancy reports and teaching resources. Her research has focussed on how power relationships are maintained and challenged, particularly by corporations and professions. Her books, some of which have been translated into other languages, include:

- **Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism** (Green Books, Devon, UK and Scribe, Melbourne, 1997, 2002)
- **Selling the Work Ethic** (Zed Books, London and Scribe, Melbourne, 2000)
- **Suiting Themselves: How Corporations Drive the Global Agenda** (Earthscan, London, 2006)
- **This Little Kiddy Went to Market: The Corporate Capture of Childhood** (Pluto, London, 2009)

She is a qualified professional engineer and worked in this field until a career shift into researching and teaching environmental politics. She has held a number of appointments at Australian universities over the past two decades – most recently as professor in the School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication at the University of Wollongong in Australia.

**Endorsements**

Gabriel Kolko, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at York University

"This is a unique and comprehensive account of the crucial struggle for control over power and electricity, ranging from the United States before 1914, the role of the International Monetary Fund in opposing public ownership, to the shocking practices and consequences of Enron in India and privatization in Brazil during the past decade. Sharon Beder writes with verve and elucidates the arcane aspects of this fundamental and very basic dimension of modern industrial society. At the same time, her research is impeccable. For a general and comprehensible account of the struggle for control of electrical power, there is no equal to Beder's Power Play. This is an important and readable book."

Ian Lowe, emeritus professor at Griffith University

"This book will make you very angry"

Mike Davis, author of City of Quartz, Dead Cities, and Prisoners of the American Dream

"Beder has written a brilliant global history of the catastrophic consequences of neo-liberal fundamentalism."

**Reviews**

- LA Times
- Publishers Weekly
- Z Magazine
- The Age
- Sydney Morning Herald
- Sun Herald
- Otago Daily Times
- Revisión del libro en español (pdf)
- Alternatives Journal (pdf)
Power play or powerplay or their plurals may refer to: Power play (sporting term), a sporting term used in various games. Powerplay (cricket), a rule concerning fielding restrictions in one-day international cricket. Power play (curling), a rule concerning the placing of stones in mixed-gender curling. PowerPlay Golf, a variation of nine-hole golf, featuring two flags on a green. Power Play (1978 film), a 1978 thriller film. Power Play (2003 film), a 2003 thriller film.
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