

# OMNI CORPORATE USA NEWSLETTER #1

August 7, 2008, Compiled by Dick Bennett

## OMNI'S CORPORATE WATCH

Each week, *The Morning News* offers us a profile of an Arkansas corporate executive under the headline, "Corporate Watch." It's no "watch" whatever, for each exec, instead of being examined, is puffed. We have little corporate watch in Arkansas. For examples, no Arkansas news business employs an investigative reporter to watch the economic powers in Arkansas, and Arkansas Attorney Generals, in contrast to the former AG of New York State, except for the egregiously usurious cash lenders, have never brought a case of corporate crime, in my memory. Let OMNI's Corporate Newsletters be the beginning of an active CORPORATE WATCH in Arkansas. On a national scale, **We, the People** in Arkansas are contributing to the creation of democracy from below by examining the power of the Carbon Corporate National Security State. "**Imagination** is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine, and at last you create what you will." - George Bernard Shaw Perhaps the next newsletter will focus on US capitalism, empire, and wars.

**SENATOR LINCOLN (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.**

**Fayetteville office: 251-1380**

**Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908**

**CONGRESSMAN Boozman: Lowell office: 479-725-0400.**

## CONTENTS

Ralph Nader

Story of Stuff

Increasing Inequality

Marxist analysis of capitalism, a new film

Triumph of Capitalism

Four Case Studies:

Exxon Valdes

Corporate Control of Water

Soft Drinks Industry

Beijing Olympics

Reducing Domination

## RALPH NADER

See Ralph Nader's analysis of corporate domination via Amy Goodman's interview 6-10-2007 during the conference "Taming the Giant Corporation" (I viewed it Saturday night 6-16) ([www.tamethecorporation.org](http://www.tamethecorporation.org)). It is the most powerful one-hour indictment of US capitalism I have ever heard. Filmed by C-Span, American Perspectives, "Corporations and 2008 Election." To purchase the film: [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org); [www.c-span.org/shop](http://www.c-span.org/shop); 1-877-662-7726.

GRAPHIC MOVIE: HISTORY OF OUR CORPORATE CULTURE

Show it to children especially.

<http://www.storyofstuff.com/>

**THE NEW INEQUALITY: CORPORATE POWER**

*The Nation* (June 30, 2008), 7 essays.

**SENATOR LINCOLN (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.**

**Fayetteville office: 251-1380**

**Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908**

**CONGRESSMAN Boozman: Lowell office: 479-725-0400.**

SEVERAL ANALYSES OF THE FURTHER REDUCTION OF THE COMMONS BY  
PRIVATIZATION FOR PROFIT

A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF CAPITALISM

"A Really Inconvenient Truth: Ecosocialism or Barbarism" by  
Joel Kovel (2007). Shown on FSTV June 25, 2008 and August  
7, 2008.

[www.areallyinconvenienttruth.com](http://www.areallyinconvenienttruth.com) See Kovel's *The Enemy of  
Nature*.

"The Big Outcome of the '60s: The Triumph of Capitalism"

By [Slavoj Zizek](#), [In These Times](#). Posted [June 27, 2008](#). [For the complete essay go to *In  
These Times* (July 2008), "The Ambiguous Legacy of '68."]

What better proof of capitalism's triumph in the last three decades than the disappearance of the  
very term "capitalism"? So, again, the only *true* question today is: Do we endorse this  
naturalization of capitalism, or does today's global capitalism contain contradictions strong  
enough to prevent its indefinite reproduction?

There are (at least) four such antagonisms: the looming threat of *ecological catastrophe*; the  
inappropriateness of *private property* rights for so-called "intellectual property"; the socio-ethical  
implications of *new techno-scientific developments* (especially in biogenetics); and, last but not least,  
*new forms of apartheid*, in the form of new walls and slums.

The first three antagonisms concern the domains of what political theorists Michael Hardt and  
Toni Negri call "commons" -- the shared substance of our social being whose privatization is a  
violent act that should be resisted with violent means, if necessary (violence against private  
property, that is).

*The commons of external nature* are threatened by pollution and exploitation (from oil to forests  
and natural habitat itself); *the commons of internal nature* (the biogenetic inheritance of humanity)  
are threatened by technological interference; and *the commons of culture* -- the socialized forms of  
"cognitive" capital, primarily language, our means of communication and education, but also the  
shared infrastructure of public transport, electricity, post, etc. -- are privatized for profit. (If Bill  
Gates were to be allowed a monopoly, we would have reached the absurd situation in which a  
private individual would have owned the software texture of our basic network of communication.)

FOUR CASE STUDIES OF CORPORATE POWER: EXXON VALDES,  
PRIVATIZATION OF WATER, SOFT DRINKS, OLYMPIC GAMES

## EXXON-MOBIL WILL PAY ONE-TENTH OF ITS ORIGINAL FINE

Exxon was fined \$5 billion for the oil spill by its Exxon Valdes in Alaska. Later the fine was cut in half. Now our Supreme Court has reduced the fine again to one-tenth. That the victims--people of the state of Alaska--will never be recompensed adequately is bad enough. But the deep danger in the ruling is what corporations have been seeking for a long time: protection from jury punitive damages. Talk to your congressional delegation.

### PRIVATIZATION OF WATER

#### "Fighting the Corporate Theft of Our **Water**"

By Tara Lohan, AlterNet

Posted on April 25, 2007, Printed on December 15, 2007 [For the complete essay go to

<http://www.alternet.org/story/50994/> ]

All across the United States, municipal water systems are being bought up by **multinational corporations**, turning one of our last remaining public commons and our most vital resource into a commodity.

The road to **privatization** is being paved by our own government. The Bush administration is actively working to loosen the hold that cities and towns have over public water, enabling corporations to own the very thing we depend on for survival.

The effects of the federal government's actions are being felt all the way down to Conference of Mayors, which has become a "feeding frenzy" for corporations looking to make sure that nothing is left in the public's hands, including clean, affordable water.

**Documentary filmmakers Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman recently teamed up with author Michael Fox to write *Thirst: Fighting the Corporate Theft of Our Water* (Wiley, 2007).** The three followed water privatization battles across the United States -- from California to Massachusetts and from Georgia to Wisconsin, documenting the rise of public opposition to corporate control of water resources.

They found that the issue of privatization ran deep.

"We came to see that the conflicts over water are really about fundamental **questions of democracy itself**: Who will make the decisions that affect our future, and who will be excluded?" they wrote in the book's preface. "And if citizens no longer control their most basic resource, their water, do they really control anything at all?"

As the **effects of climate change** are being felt around the world, including decreasing snowpacks and rainfall, water is quickly becoming the market's new holy grail.

Taking a stand against corporate control of water means believing that some things, like the lifeblood of our communities, should not be for sale.

"Whether clean and safe water will remain accessible to all,

affordable and sustainable into the future, depends on us," write Snitow, Kaufman and Fox. "The stakes could not be higher. The outcome will surely be a measure of democracy in the 21st century."

*Tara Lohan is a managing editor at AlterNet.*

© 2007 Independent Media Institute. All rights reserved.

View this story online at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/50994/>

## POISONOUS CORPORATE SOFT DRINKS INDUSTRY

### Killing Us Gently

By James Secor



The Crass Vigilance of The Soft Drink Molochs and Their Slow Throttling of the American Public For Loaves and Fishes

By James L. Secor

The American Beverage Association (ABA) sells some of the most popular non-alcoholic beverages in the world.

Carbonated soft drinks make up 73% of that total. Americans spend roughly \$93 billion annually on refreshment beverages (about \$357/person). The ABA believes that all beverages are part of a healthy, balanced lifestyle and helps this along by producing various sized beverages so as to incorporate different, that is larger, serving portions into diets.



This is what the ABA says about itself. Let us stop here for a moment. \$93 billion in refreshment beverages. \$93 billion--why? What has Americans hooked? Caffeine, yes, but the ABA sells 7-Up and Sprite which contain no caffeine, if we believe the PR and product labeling (which the ABA is fighting to get rid of). But even more disturbing is the contention that soft drinks are part of a healthy diet. Which healthy diet? Whose--Atkins'? Other than the ABA, who else makes the same claim? But it sounds good, so people believe it. After all, the ABA is an authority. In reality, this claim about soft drinks being part of a healthy diet is specious.

What are these profits? With approximately 122.5 billion servings/year (or 471 soft drinks/person/year), the soft drink industry rakes in about \$93 billion. Of course, no mention is made of the fact that 43% of those profits are from government subsidies, what is colloquially called "corporate welfare." Fifty-seven percent of \$93 billion is about \$53 billion. How does a \$53 billion/year business rate a subsidy when so many Americans are in dire straits? How is it that the corporate sector can receive welfare when such subsidies are shameful for the individual and considered a wasteful expense?

One of the answers lies in bought friends in the government: our Senators and Representatives. In 2005, however, things became even more secure: the ABA hired, as Senior Vice President for Communications, Kevin Keane who was Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs at Health and Human Services (HHS). He was an advisor to Tommy Thompson. He was hired to direct the strategic

communications program, read propaganda. That is, the ABA managed to acquire an inside touch. Mr. Keane can help science along in support of the ABA, as Mr. Bush helps science support his rapacious programs.

### **Another answer lies in corn subsidies and sugar tariffs.**

Page 2 [The rest of the essay is about the economic advantages given to soft drink companies and the negative health effects of high fructose sweeteners.]

*Jimsecor is a freelance writer who has travelled extensively overseas, especially Japan and China. He has published in all genres and produced several plays over the years and has taught theatre, writing and literature.*

## The Olympics, China, and Corporations

“Partners In Grime” By Sally Jenkins Tuesday, August 5, 2008; E01

[I have excised several paragraphs. D]

You only have to breathe the air to understand that these Olympics aren't about sport. They're about corporate profit, a propaganda stage for the Chinese government, and the moral collapse of the Olympic movement, but the very last thing they're about is excellence or the well-being of the athletes. The real interests, the real priorities, are in the air. ...

So what is this Olympics really about? It's about 12 major corporations and their panting ambitions to tap into China's 1.3 billion consumers, the world's third-largest economy. Understand this: The International Olympic Committee is nothing more than a puppet for its corporate "partners," without whom there would be no Games. These major sponsors pay the IOC's bills for staging the Olympics to the tune of \$7 billion per cycle. Without them, and their designs on the China market, Beijing probably would not have won the right to host the Summer Games.

Seven years ago, in controversially awarding the Games to the Chinese regime, the IOC assured us that a Beijing Games would be both beneficial and benevolent, and promote a more open society. Chinese officials, too, vowed that the Games would not only foster their economy but "enhance all social conditions, including education, health and human rights."

The clouded air is just the most observable sign of the many unfulfilled promises since then. If the society has opened somewhat, there has also been a specific crackdown on dissidents as a direct result of the Olympics. Thousands of people have been rounded up and jailed for expressing dissent -- right now a man named Hu Jia is in a prison just outside Beijing for "inciting subversion" because he testified via Webcam before the European Union that the Chinese government wasn't living up to its Olympic commitments. Hu is ill with hepatitis B and undergoing "reform" in Chaobai prison, while his family is under constant surveillance. The crackdown continued this week with the jailing of several farmers, and efforts to censor the Olympic media. Amnesty International estimates that half a million people are being held without charges here.

Anyone who believed the Chinese government would use the Olympics as an opportunity to become a human rights beacon and environmental model was either softheaded, or lying. Capitalism is not the same thing as democracy. China's interest then and now was the consolidation of state power via economics. The government is merely behaving as it always has.

But the bad air here has shown the IOC and its commercial sponsors in an especially ugly and damning light. They have been conspicuous cowards in dealing with Chinese officials, and maybe even outright collaborators, on every issue from human rights to the environment to censorship. The silence of IOC President Jacques Rogge in the face of the continuing dissident sweeps amounts to complicity. "In view of my responsibilities, I have lost some of my freedom of speech," he said last week. Rogge's idea of a solution to the thorny problems of these Games is to hope "the magic" will take over once they begin.

Most disgraceful of all is the fact that six of the 12 worldwide Olympic partners are American companies. This has to heart-sicken any patriot. These companies will reap the full exposure of the Summer Games, swathing themselves in the flag, and rationalizing that their business is helping uplift the Chinese people. Don't buy it -- or them. You should know exactly who they are: General Electric (which owns NBC), Coca-Cola, Visa, McDonald's, Kodak, and Johnson & Johnson. (The others are Canadian-based Manulife Financial; Lenovo, the Chinese personal computer maker; the French information technology services company Atos Origin; the Swiss watch manufacturer Omega; Panasonic; and Samsung.) When these acquiesced to the Chinese government's crackdown, and effectively accepted the censorship of the press during these Games, they fell into a special category of profiteers that Franklin Delano Roosevelt described in his "Four Freedoms" speech.

"We must especially beware of that small group of selfish men who would clip the wings of the American eagle in order to feather their own nests," Roosevelt said....

#### BOOKS ON US CORPORATE STATE, CAPITALISM USA

Greider, William. *Come Home, America*. See his essay in *The Nation* (August 18-25, 2008), "Economic Free Fall?" "We are flirting with catastrophe, a danger compounded by dependence on foreign creditors," a "peril...vastly larger than...the savings and loan bailout of the late 1980s."

--Chait, Jonathan. *The Big Con: The True Story of How Washington Got Hood-winked and Hijacked by Crackpot Economics*. Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

--Johnston, David Cay. *Free Lunch: How the Wealthiest Americans Enrich Themselves at Government Expense (and Stick You with the Bill)*. Portfolio, 2008.

Both books rev. by Steve Fraser, *The Progressive* (July 2008). The books "join a vast armada of literature chronicling the astonishing inequalities of wealth and income that have earned our own era the dubious sobriquet 'second Gilded Age.'"

--"Ecosocialism against cynicism: a review of Joel Kovel's ***The Enemy of Nature***

" by [Cassiodorus](#) Tue Feb 06, 2007 at 05:01:13 PM PDT

This is a revisitation of Joel Kovel's (2002) book [The Enemy of Nature](#) in light of a discussion I had with Joel, who says he is currently working on a 2nd edition. Kovel's work is the quintessential manifesto of ecosocialism (notwithstanding the actual ["Ecosocialist Manifesto"](#) he co-wrote with Michael Lowy).

-- ***Ecosocialism or Barbarism* edited by Jane Kelly and Sheila Malone.**

Jane Kelly and Sheila Malone have gathered together articles from some of the world's leading ecologists and Marxists to discuss how the profoundly interrelated crises of ecology and social breakdown should be seen as different manifestations of the same structural forces. They argue that capitalism cannot

regulate, much less overcome, the crises it has set going. It cannot solve the ecological crisis because to do so requires setting limits upon accumulation—an unacceptable option for a system predicated upon the rule: Grow or Die! And it cannot solve the crisis posed by terror and other forms of violent rebellion because this would mean abandoning the logic of empire, imposing unacceptable limits on growth and the “way of life” sustained by empire.

--“The Corporation” film, shown on FSTV 6-29-08 on liabilities of capitalism, esp. US corporate power. Argues: need to eliminate legal corporate personhood, corp. opposition to democracy, corp. vs. sustainability, corp. unaccountability, etc. Hope: if we could decommodify slavery, we can free ourselves from the corp. yoke, for there is a moral order superior to profit making. Dirs. Marck Achbar, et al.

--Greenhouse, Steve. *The Big Squeeze*. 2008. Pressures on working people today increasing—stagnant or declining wages, eroding benefits and job security, etc., on account of the power of the owners and the destruction of unions. Interviewed on “Grit TV” 6-28-08.

--Gosselin, Peter. *High Wire: The Precarious Financial Lives of American Families*. 2008. Rev. TMN (6-15-08), Anne McFeatters: “...a majority of US public are in danger of taking steep financial falls” largely on their own, “buffeted by financial forces far beyond our control, sometimes even beyond our knowledge.”

--Fraser, Steve. *Wall Street: America’s Dream Palace*. Yale UP, 2008. See his rev. of Chait’s *The Big Con* and Johnston’s *Free Lunch*.

--Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007). See Klein’s essay, *The Nation* (July 21/28, 2008), “Disaster Capitalism: State of Extortion.”

--Salter, Malcolm. *Innovation Corrupted: The Origins and Legacy of Enron’s Collapse*. Harvard UP, 2008. Why success without an ethical foundation leads to disaster.

--Schechter, Danny. *Plunder*. Interv. by Amy G 7-17.

-- "Toxic Trespass" by [moonwolf](#) | May 18, 2007 at 06:20 pm | 801 views | [2 comments](#)  
[slideshow](#) [view all 2](#) (Shown on FSTV 6-30-08 on CAT)

Just released, the documentary movie "Toxic Trespass" by Canadian Director Barry Cohen, investigates growing evidence that we are conducting a large scale toxicological experiment on our children . Toxic Trespass reveals the links between industrial chemicals, environmental degradation and childhood illness, and asks why governments are doing so shockingly little about the problem. It’s a call to arms for citizens to fight the pollution that affects us all.

## TAKING ACTION

### REDUCING CORPORATE SUPERRICH DOMINATION

“Ending Plutocracy: A 12-Step Program” by Sarah Anderson and Sam Pizzigati, *The Nation* (June 30, 2008).

**SENATOR LINCOLN (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.**

**Fayetteville office: 251-1380**

**Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908**

**CONGRESSMAN Boozman: Lowell office: 479-725-0400.**

Each of us is responsible for defending and improving our democracy.

OMNI SEEKS A WORLD FREE OF WAR AND THE THREAT OF WAR, A SOCIETY WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERY PERSON'S POTENTIAL MAY BE FULFILLED, AN EARTH RESTORED. GRASSROOTS NONVIOLENCE, WORLD PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, SOCIAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE, ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROTECTING SPECIES AND THE EARTH. These are OMNI's ideals. Read our brochure and our newsletters, attend our Steering Committee, become an active member of one or more of our committees, participate in our dozens of activities to see how these broad goals are realized in action. This bibliography is one small action.