



Power Play

The fight for control of the world's electricity

by [Sharon Beder](#)

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[The New Press](#), New York, August 2003
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[Soshisha Publishing](#), Japan, Japanese translation, 2005
[Fondo de Cultura Económica](#), Mexico, Spanish translation, 2005

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

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

[Reviews](#) | [About the Author](#) | [Endorsements](#) | [Other Publications](#)

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)
- [Environmental Principles and Policies](#) (UNSW Press, Sydney and Earthscan, London, 2006)
- [Free Market Missionaries: The Corporate Manipulation of Community Values](#) (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)

[contents](#) | [description](#) | [endorsements](#) | [other publications by the author](#) | [top](#)

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