2000

Threats to Democracy: Conference Proceedings: the corporate assault on democracy.

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Publication Details


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Abstract
Thank you for inviting me. The issue in the news at the moment, of course, is the Laws-Jones Affair and ‘Cash for Comment’. But what I would like to point out is that this is just the tip of the iceberg of what’s going on in our society. The corporations are not just using journalists to put forward the corporate point of view but they are using every institution of our society. They are using universities, schools, think tanks, and research institutes--anyone they can get who is willing to put the corporate point of view--rather than be up-front and put it themselves.

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details
The Corporate Assault on Democracy

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Citation: Sharon Beder, 'The Corporate Assault on Democracy', Australian Rationalist 52, 2000, pp. 4-11.

This is a final version submitted for publication. Minor editorial changes may have subsequently been made.

Sharon Beder's Other Publications

This is the edited transcript of a talk given to a Rationalist conference

Thank you for inviting me. The issue in the news at the moment, of course, is the Laws-Jones Affair and 'Cash for Comment'. But what I would like to point out is that this is just the tip of the iceberg of what's going on in our society. The corporations are not just using journalists to put forward the corporate point of view but they are using every institution of our society. They are using universities, schools, think tanks, and research institutes--anyone they can get who is willing to put the corporate point of view--rather than be up-front and put it themselves.

And the other thing which I would say about the Laws-Jones Affair that most of the media has been talking about buying publicity and in a way publicity is a bit like advertising and people are aware of it. But there are broader things happening and that is that corporations are using other people--third parties--not just for publicity to create a better image for themselves, but to actually undermine democracy, to manipulate public opinion, to subtly influence the way people think about issues such as environmental problems. And to undermine our ability to adjust to a situation where we are degrading the planet. So I think there is a huge issue here that still needs to be uncovered and that is what I am going to be talking about today.

The reason that corporations need to employ these deceitful tactics is that people are a bit cynical when they hear a corporate spokesperson stand up and say: this legislation shouldn't go through because it bad for the economy. People aren't stupid. They can see that the corporate spokesperson is really concerned about the corporation’s profits. And so people can make their own judgements because they can see where the argument is coming from. So corporations have had to get a bit clever in order to put forward views that are given more credibility and using the media is one way to do it. But they've come up with all sorts of other techniques of getting their view across without people knowing it's their view. One particular way is to use corporate front groups.

Corporate front groups are groups that are funded and directed by corporations and are putting forward a corporate point of view. But they don’t appear, on the face of it, to be corporate groups. They have names that sound like environmental groups or consumer groups or public interest groups or even scientific groups. (And so) people don’t realise that this group which is saying something is really corporation X or trade association Y or whatever. So for example when the American Council on Science and Health says that Nutrasweet is not bad for you it has much more credibility than if Nutrasweet’s CEO or
public relations officer gets up and says that Nutrasweet is not bad for you. So of course the American Council on Science and Health gets lots of funding from food-drink chemical companies to put forward these views "that Burger King is nutritious", that sort of thing, funding to defend these sorts of products.

The sorts of things that front groups do is first of all to cast doubt on the importance of particular social or environmental problems and the obvious example here is global warming because (I’ll be coming back to this later when I talk about think tanks) but for example the Global Climate Coalition is an amalgamation of oil, gas, car, manufacturing, chemical interests and trade associations. Their aim is to argue that global warming is just a theory, with lots of people who disagree with it.

The aim of casting doubt on something like global warming is not to win the argument, nor to win everybody to the opinion that global warming is not going to happen, but to create enough confusion that there isn’t the public pressure to get politicians to change their minds, to implement regulations and measures which will reduce global warming. That would involve, of course, putting some controls on what these corporations that emit the gases do. The public relations strategy behind casting doubt on issues such as global warming is to undermine the will to do something about it. To say "well it’s all so controversial – let’s just wait and see. Maybe it won’t be a problem after all" or secondly "it’s actually going to be too expensive to do something about it", that the costs of the measures are going to be more than the costs of the warming. (That is the costs in terms of jobs and economic growth etc.)

This strategy has been so successful with global warming that they have now gone back and looked at the Montreal Protocol, which is a treaty to do something about ozone depletion, and in the United States they’ve managed to convince the Republicans there to say "well maybe we shouldn’t have actually agreed to that Montreal Protocol, maybe this ozone depletion is all a big hoax and its not actually going to happen at all.'"

The same sort of strategy has been used on issues such as acid rain, species depletion, and of course the dangers of chemicals have long been a matter of controversy.

Another thing which front groups do is to try and promote superficial solutions rather than effective solutions. An example in the United States is Keep America Beautiful. Keep America Beautiful gets millions of dollars per year from over 200 companies. Now what sort of companies do you think would donate money to Keep America Beautiful, which is basically an anti-litter organisation? Paper companies, Coca-Cola, McDonalds? That’s right. So we’ve got Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Scots Paper. We’ve got aluminium can companies, paper products, glass bottles, plastics, etc. Companies that deal with the waste as well, that take the materials to landfill etc. They’re in there too.

The strategy here is first of all to concentrate on litter so that the problem is seen to be the people who drop the paper rather than companies that produce the packaging. They want to avoid mandatory re-cycling and deposit legislation. The sort of measures which are government measures. They want us to be feeling guilty that we’ve dropped paper. Not anything to do with the companies. The aim is to shift the focus and promote superficial solutions and to shift the focus from the corporations to the individual. As long as we feel that we’re not perfect –

which none of us are – in terms of protecting the environment then we’re not going to go pointing the finger at them.

Keep America Beautiful is American but of course in Australia we have Keep Australia Beautiful. Keep Australia Beautiful’s vision statement is "for a nation where all Australian’s protect and advance their environment by their own actions". The
organisation runs strong anti-litter campaigns. Its sponsors are Mitsubishi Motors, Tetrapak, Coca-Cola Amatil, the Wrigley Company, and various other sponsors. The interesting thing about the sponsors is that when I looked up the web page of Keep Australia Beautiful it says, "Keep Australia Beautiful is committed to ensuring that Mitsubishi Motors Australia is recognised as a concerned and responsible corporate citizen". I wondered how on earth they got that on their web page. I can see that this may be their goal behind the scenes.

The patrons as listed on their web page: Patron-in-Chief, the Governor General (Sir William Deane), Patrons, John Howard, Tim Fischer, Kim Beazley, Cheryl Kernot. Keep Australia Beautiful has branches in each state and in New South Wales Keep Australia Beautiful is supported by the beverage industry, the Environment Council, the Association of Liquid Paper Board Carton Manufacturers and various waste, water, tourism organisations.

They have materials that they put in schools to tell children about the litter problem and they say that smokers, young people, and motorists are Australia’s worst litterers. So they are the problem. The biggest single litter item is cigarette butts. I notice that we don’t have any cigarette companies actually funding Keep Australia Beautiful whereas in the United States Phillip Morris is there and they don’t have such an emphasis on cigarette butts. There is also that icon of virtue, Clean Up Australia, which is sponsored by McDonalds, Westpac and Ansell (which produces condoms).

Also in Australia a group most people would have heard of is the Forest Protection Society which of course would be better named the "Forest Industries Protection Society". NAFI the National Association of Forest Industries is behind the Forest Protection Society as well, having helped to establish it while sharing the same postal address. The current executive director of the Forest Protection Society was a founding member of NAFI and the links are obvious when you look for them.

The Forest Protection Society is also a good example of a group that takes on a name that makes it sound like an environmental group so that when it’s quoted in the media people think it’s an environmental group. The media very seldom says where a front group gets its funding from. They merely report what the front groups says. So people think it is an environmental group or community group.

Another way that public relations firms get the corporate voice heard is through organising artificial grassroots campaigns – Astroturf. When a corporation wants to oppose a piece of legislation it can hire a specialist firm that telephones people and puts the case for why the legislation is a bad idea. The ‘telemarketer’ then asks them if they would like to speak to their local politician about it. If they say yes they are patched through to the politician’s office before they have a chance to think about it.

In this way the politician gets a bunch of calls opposing the legislation and assumes that there must be a grassroots swell against it. But in this case these aren’t the people who feel so strongly that they are writing or ringing, because the PR specialists are actually making it very easy for them and they’ve sort of put them on the spot and there they are.

And in the same (way) they write letters for people. One firm, John Davies, rings people up and they say "well would you be willing to write to your politician" and they offer to write the letter for them. They hand write it on kitty cat stationery if it’s a little old lady, use different stamps different envelopes because the aim is to make it seem like its coming from all these different people.

In Australia there is still a tendency to have postcard campaigns especially in
environmental (campaigns). They generate lots of postcards and everyone fills in a postcard and it’s pretty obvious to the politician that it’s a campaign-generated thing. Whereas these firms get paid a lot of money and the corporations are able to give a much more genuine impression that there is this grassroots feeling against the legislation.

Whilst the corporations are getting other people to put forward their (the corporation’s) views and to make it seem that there are lots of people on their side. They are also making sure that the people who are on the other side don’t speak out by threatening them with lawsuits etc., Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation or SLAPPs. Some people in Australia won’t use the term SLAPPs because, to talk about a particular case and call it a SLAPP, you can be sued for doing that. There was one conference I went to which was organised by the Environmental Defenders Office and I had put in a paper which I was going to present and they rang me at the last minute because they were afraid that one of the developers involved in one of the case studies they were covering would actually sue them for implying that they were SLAPPing opponents if I used the word SLAPPs in conjunction with Australia, even though I was two papers earlier. The inference could be made that this particular case was a SLAPP and they would be sued and I would be sued and so I had to make my paper just about the United States so that it couldn’t be inferred that I was talking about their particular case.

These SLAPPs do originate mainly in the United States although there is quite a long history in Australia as well. But in the United States we are talking about tens of thousand of people being sued each year for exercising their democratic rights. The example that I like to quote because it is so farcical is a woman in Texas (this is 1986 - so it’s a long while ago) who was sued by a company for 5 million dollars for using the term "dump" to describe a landfill which was going to be in her neighbourhood, just for using the term "dump". But the thing was that her husband was also sued although he wasn’t involved in the campaign at all. But he was sued for "failing to control his wife". (laughter)

Now obviously – (interjection indistinct) - this is the point I’m going to make- that that obviously couldn’t win in court – failing to control your wife–what sort of grounds is that? Its not something that’s going to win in court. Many of these cases have no merit - most of them don’t actually get to court. The idea is just to intimidate people because maybe they’re not seasoned campaigners and activists but just people who are opposing things in their neighbourhood. They’ve never been politically active before. They’ve got homes and they become very frightened, you know, that they might lose their home.

It certainly gives them pause to think and it certainly gives their neighbours pause to think too about being involved in this. They feel they have to get legal advice and that costs money and even when they don’t go to court they can be there threatening to go to court for years. This what has happened with the case at Helensburgh, which is near where I live. A developer going to develop this area near Helensburgh and some residents were lobbying the Council to change the zoning to environmental protection – it was right next to the Royal National Park – and they got sued for conspiracy, because they were persuading people to write letters to the Council. You would think this was part of your democratic right to do this sort of thing! It has not yet gone to court – it was years ago – but it’s still hanging over their heads and it could still go to court anytime.

Even in the United States where they have so many SLAPPs, when they do go to court 70% of those suing don’t win. But they actually win long before they go to court. Because the idea is to intimidate the target – the person being sued; to chill the rest of the people who are likely to oppose them or who are involved in the campaign; to divert the energy and resources of those people who are being sued because then instead of going public and making their statements in the media they are concentrating their
efforts in fighting the court case. They are diverted from the public debate. The whole debate goes from the public to behind closed doors – you know between lawyers and in court, where it’s not public any more. This is the problem. The arena of conflict moves from the public arena to a private arena where corporations obviously have more resources and can afford better lawyers and more time etc and they obviously have much more power in that other arena.

There was a question earlier on in the first session about think tanks and think tanks have played a major role in terms of undermining democracy particularly with relation to environmental issues and the obvious example which comes to mind is the global warming issue. In the United States there are lots and lots of think tanks and many of them are very big and very powerful. And the conservative think tanks, particularly the ones that were either established or revived in the 1970s, argue for smaller government and less regulation and this fits very much with what corporations want as well. They get lots of corporate funding because there is this common goal of having less regulation.

Also there is a revolving door between these think tanks and governments, bureaucracies, and politicians. Also the media. There are people who have moved from one to another. So think tanks have good access to the media but the media doesn’t say “this person here is so and so from the Heritage Foundation and the Heritage Foundation gets its funding from corporations such as automobile manufacturers, oil, coal, chemical, tobacco, companies foundations etc.” It doesn’t say that. It just says, ”here is an expert from the Heritage Foundation”. And so they are presented in the media as experts.

We have think tanks here in Australia too - there are think tanks in most countries these days, particularly English speaking countries, and these think tanks – what they’ve done is to take a handful of scientists who are dissident scientists who say either “global warming is not going to happen” or “if it does happen it’s not going to have much effect” or ”it’s actually going to be beneficial, we are going to have more crops because there’s more carbon dioxide in the air” and all these sorts of things.

What we’re talking about is a handful of scientists and when you look at the literature the same names are coming up over and over. The reason that these same names are coming up over and over is that these think tank and corporations are funding these scientists – flying them around the world to conferences, including to Australia – to put this point of view. Therefore the voice of these particular dissident scientists who are only a small handful get very much more amplified than their numbers would justify. So although there is a basic consensus in the scientific community and the inter-governmental panel on climate change, which represents 2,500 international scientists, say that global warming is already happening, the amplification of these dissident scientists’ views makes it seem as if the whole thing is a bit unsure and might not happen, to confuse the whole issue.

And so we have scientists, some of whom are not global warming scientists at all or haven’t published for years and they get their name as an expert because they are associated with a think tank. But there are a few who do have credentials in their own right. One is Patrick Michaels. Now Patrick Michaels is with the University of Virginia and he is an atmospheric scientist so he is actually in the area, which many of them aren’t, but Patrick Michaels is also a Fellow with the Cato Institute, which is a major U.S. think tank. It is libertarian. It is anti-government. It has an annual budget of six million dollars. And it gets its money from individuals and corporations including American Farm Bureau, American Petroleum Institute, Coca-Cola, Exxon, Ford Motor, Monsanto, Phillip Morris, Proctor and Gamble etc.

Michaels also gets personal funding from Western Fuels Association, Cypress Minerals
Company, the Edison Electrical Institute, the German Coal Mining Association and he edits a journal called The World Climate Report, which is funded by the Western Fuels Association, which is a consortium of coal interests.

Michaels has been to Australia at least twice that I know of, brought out by corporate and think tank people. He was quoted the Sydney Morning Herald as saying "You would find it very hard to say it was a net negative. I find it very hard to believe that the folks in the Pacific Islands won’t adapt to 30 centimetre sea level rise". (laughter)

There are others I could name. I guess the other one I’ll talk about is someone who has also been brought out to Australia at least twice. His name is Fred Singer. He is executive director of his own think tank called the Science and Environment Policy Project, which was originally set up with the help of the Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy which was funded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church (do you remember the Moonies?). So its got some very right wing connections there. Now Singer himself used to publish in the area of climate he hasn’t actually published for about twenty years now. He works for companies like Exxon, Shell, Arco. He not only disputes global warming but he also disputes ozone depletion. And species extinction as well.

The Heritage Foundation is perhaps the largest think tank in the United States it puts out "backgrounder"s and the idea is that they are short enough for a politician to read between the office and the airport. Just the right sort of length. Anyway one of their backgrounder was called the road to Kyoto. Kyoto was the conference where greenhouse emissions targets were agreed to at the end of 1997. They put this backgrounder out in the run up to Kyoto. Trying to ensure that the U.S. didn’t agree to anything: "The Road to Kyoto: How the Global Climate Treaty Fosters Economic Impoverishment and Endangers U.S. Security". It read "Chicken Little is back and the sky is falling or so suggests the Clinton Administration". Not scientists but the Clinton Administration. "By championing the global warming treaty the Administration seeks to pacify a vociferous lobby which frequently has made unsubstantiated prediction of environmental doom". Of course these think tanks are quite happy to make unsubstantiated predictions of economic gloom as a result of the treaty but they won’t accept any suggestion of environmental gloom.

Australia’s think tanks have been the same bandwagon. So we have the Institute of Public Affairs (the IPA) which gets about one-third of its funding from manufacturing and mining companies and it’s hired Brian Tucker who was previously chief of the CSIRO Division of Atmospheric Research. He is now Senior Fellow with IPA and he says things like – this is what he said on Ockam’s Razor on the ABC: "Unchallenged climatic data hyperbole has induced something akin to a panic reaction from policy makers both national and international. There is little evidence to support the notion of net deleterious climate change despite recent Cassandra like trepidation in the Australian Medical Association and exaggerations from Greenpeace."

The technique here is to make it seem as if global warming is something that environmentalists have dreamed up or to make it sound as if there is no science supporting it at all. Which is the complete opposite of the actual situation where the consensus opinion among most scientists is that it is happening.

It is not as if his stuff just sticks with the IPA. Engineering World, which is the magazine for engineers, has re-printed one of its articles from IPA Review as if this is an independent expert speaking here and I don’t know how many engineering conferences I’ve been to where it’s been quoted as a scientific paper. As if he says it, it’s true.

The other type of think tank that is relevant here is the economic think tank and in Australia we have ABARE, which is the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource
Economics, which has increasingly had to get its funding from private industry. I don’t know how many of you remember the expose about its model. It modelled the affect of Australia meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets and it said it was going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars and ninety thousand jobs and Tim Fischer actually opened a conference quoting those same figures leading up to Kyoto.

This was a conference called Count Down to Kyoto which was held in Canberra. It was organised by the Frontiers of Freedom Institute which is U.S. think tank. But you wouldn’t have known that because this conference held in Canberra had Australia’s top business people there and politicians – Tim Fischer opened it. The guy who headed Frontiers of Freedom Institute, a guy called Malcolm Wallup, is an ex-U.S. Congressman who championed star wars etc. and all sorts of other things. On his home page at the time he said that the Count Down to Kyoto Conference in Canberra was “a shot across the bow of those who would champion Kyoto targets” or something like this.

Anyway these figures, which ABARE had come up with, came from its models – and I should mention that these ninety thousand jobs which were going to be lost weren’t actually existing jobs, they were potential jobs that would have been created if Australia was able to continue increasing greenhouse gasses. These figures came from ABARE’s model. ABARE got 80% of its funds for this climate change modelling from the fossil fuel industry. They advertised in their literature, and it was on the web – I don’t know whether it still is, but it was the last time I looked. This is a quote: "For a contribution of fifty thousand dollars corporations can acquire a seat on the steering committee overseeing the development of the modelling work.

You can pay to be on there and steer the model. In fact ACF, the Australian Conservation Foundation, applied to get on the steering committee without paying the fifty thousand dollars because they thought that it might be in people’s interests to have a different sort of point of view there but they were turned down.

The other thing that think tanks have been doing is promoting free market environmentalism. What I mean by free market environmentalism is using the market to solve environmental problems rather than legislation. In other words to have tradeable pollution rights, emissions trading, economic instruments. Ways of using or creating property rights where there haven’t been any before. Or ways of saying that the market can been harnessed to protect the environment.

This all comes from their originating ideology, which is “small governments - less regulation”. Think tanks have actually been pushing these free market solutions a lot longer than corporations have. Corporations have been a bit wary of economic instruments because they thought it would cost them more. But then when – I suppose you would remember the end of the eighties, early nineties – there was a peak of environmental consciousness and people were really concerned and pushing for governments to do something. Corporations at that point realised that actually economic instruments were a better alternative than what was being threatened, which was tougher environmental regulation. Tougher legislation.

Throughout the nineties there has been a huge push for these free market solutions or economic instruments. In fact main stream environmental groups have taken them on board without question. It is very rare to find any critique of them anywhere but there is a definite ideological push behind them. The reason (apart from the ideology that the market knows best) is that economic instruments suit corporations – if they have the choice of paying to pollute or not polluting then they can still retain some autonomy. They can decide well yes we can afford our pollution or no it would be better if buy emissions rights or pay the user charge or whatever and keep on polluting. The point is that it takes the decision of our hands. We don’t get a choice about how clean our
environment is. We might get a bit more money but is money an adequate solution for a
clean environment? I’ll leave that to you to consider.

Just a brief word on public relations firms because they are behind a lot of this.
Corporations hire these public relations firms that come up with all this sophisticated
strategy. Public relations are no longer just about publicity and good image – the sort of
Jon Laws stuff we have been seeing. It’s about strategy – strategic counselling. It’s
about helping corporations to counter community groups, opposition of various sorts.

There are all sorts of sophisticated techniques, some of them underhand – like spying on
environmental groups, infiltrating community groups to find out what is going, but also
the front groups etc. In the United States now there is probably a ratio of two to one
public relations people to journalists. So of the number of people who are actually
supposed to be reporting information to us there is twice as many of them trying to
distort the information we get. That’s in the United States.

I don’t know exactly what the figures are in Australia but certainly the trends which have
been happening in the U.S. have been coming to Australia and the corporations I have
been talking about are mainly multi-national corporations that operate in all these
different countries anyway. And certainly the big public relations firms are also
international. So we have Hill and Knowlton. Have you heard of them? You should have
because it’s one of the largest public relations firms in the world: fifty offices in twenty
countries, one thousand two hundred employees, has governments as clients such as
Turkey, Peru, Israel, Egypt, Indonesia, Slovenia, Czech Government, China (after
Tiananmen Square). All the governments that need better PR. And I’m not sure if
Indonesia has Hill and Knowlton as a PR company but I’m sure that at the moment –
post East-Timor – that Indonesia has a PR company and it will be a big one.

And Hill and Knowlton represent all the worst sort of industries too–the Tobacco Institute.
They represented Three Mile Island after the nuclear accident there. They represented
Exxon after the Exxon Valdez Oil spill. These should be household names. But the point is
that these public relations firms act behind the scenes. They wouldn’t be effective if they
were out there and everyone could see what they were doing. The idea is that they’re
behind there and you don’t actually know what’s happening.

Burson-Marsteller is another huge public relations firm. It has sixty three offices in thirty
countries, one thousand seven hundred employees. Clients which have included
Nigeria during the Biafran War, Romania during the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu, the
ruling military junta in Argentina in the late nineteen seventies. Again, the Tobacco
Institute, again Three Mile Island, Union Carbide after the Bhopal disaster, A.H. Robbins
after Dalkon Shield IUD controversy etc. You get the idea.

Just in terms of environmental public relations in the United States, one billion dollars is
spent a year. Partly good publicity – painting corporations as green – but also countering
moves by environmentalists to get things changed and manipulating public opinion about
what should be done about the environment. This is so obviously an undermining of
democracy because it is distorting all the information that we get.

The final issue that I would like to talk about because I think it is about the most
insidious is education – corporate sponsored materials in schools. Again this happens
much more in the United States that Australia but it is happening increasingly in
Australia. In the United States, as in Australia, schools are under funded. Australia is, in
terms of school education, one of the lowest funding nations in the OECD. Therefore
teachers can’t afford good resources and materials and corporations come along and
offer them professional, glossy, wonderful looking materials. In the United States they
offer teachers free computers, satellites, videos, you know all that stuff, in return,
basically, for the minds of the children but its not quite as obvious as that.

Corporate donations to schools and school materials now make up 15% of corporate donations in the United States. It is a huge industry – over $400 million a year. In Australia we have the mining industry, petroleum industry, chemical companies, all producing material to go into schools, forest industries, and government bodies like Sydney Water. I’m not sure about Melbourne Water but it’s probably a similar situation.

The idea is to get kids at a young age to see things from a corporate point of view. To get the brand names in front of them and to get them to be loyal consumers and to produce hyper consumers for the future. But also in terms of environmental education, corporations realise that these kids are going to school and they are learning about the environment and they are becoming concerned. Probably of any people in the population the kids are the most concerned. They are going home and they are converting their parents. They are making their parents environmentalists too and it’s a big threat. So the idea is to get all this material into schools.

One company says (this comes from their advertising): "Imagine millions of students discussing your product in class. Imagine their teachers presenting your organisations point of view... Coming from school all these materials carry an extra measure of credibility that gives your message added weight". So for example the American Nuclear Society (this is one of the more obvious ones – they’re usually a bit more subtle than this) tells kids about the beneficial uses of nuclear technology and it tells them that everything has waste so it’s not a problem: "Anything we produce results in some leftovers that are either recycled or disposed of – whether we are making electricity from coal or nuclear, or making scrambled eggs." (Much laughter)

This is big in Australia too. I was invited to speak a couple of years ago at the Australian Science Teachers’ Association Conference in Melbourne. At this conference they had two floors of exhibitions by corporations and also publishers, but lots of corporations with their school materials there teaching science - supposedly teaching science. Using examples putting their point of view. ICI, now Orica, had its materials on chemicals and the plastics industry. To give you an idea how they subtly sort of distort the information: the Plastics Association materials talked about how much plastic there is in the waste stream, but they talk about the percentage of plastics by weight not volume. Of course plastics don’t weigh that much but the volume is the problem.

I won’t talk about media because we have presentations about the media already and advertising is a pretty obvious one – sponsorship etc. But I guess once you see the extent to which corporations are distorting or attempting to manipulate public opinion and distort the information we get you can see the threat to democracy that is involved there because democracy obviously depends very much on an informed citizenry.

Professor Sharon Beder is a visiting professorial fellow at the University of Wollongong. Sharon Beder's Publications can be found at http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb