

Right attitude, wrong target—except from the point of view of the privatizing corporations and right-wing think tanks, which have been working hard to direct our legitimate anger towards the governments that are increasingly in their service, rather than at them. It's interesting that we have words for many forms of government, but not (yet) for what happens, as David Korten put it in his book title, *When Corporations Rule the World*—although Mussolini, taking power at the same time as Hitler and Stalin, said that the form of government that he invented should be called “corporate” as well as fascist because it merged the powers of the corporation, labor, and the state. *Fascist* remains a label of insult; *corporate* never caught on.

What we are facing today is a merger of the powers of the corporation and the state. Privatization is both its method and its purpose.

CHAPTER 4

Forms of Privatization

The private sector has been increasingly focused on the potential market that a huge public sector provides in countless service areas.

—M. BRYNA SANGER, *The Welfare Marketplace*¹

Common Practices

THE PUBLIC SECTOR is already very lucrative for the corporations that have found ways to privatize parts of it. Following are the more obvious ways the transfer of our tax money from our government and public agencies into private pockets is already taking place.

OUTSOURCING, CONTRACTING OUT

A contract to do public work is given to a nongovernmental entity, with its nonpublic employees. Public money is used to pay for the work done under this contract. Corporations benefit greatly, but there are also nonprofit organizations, including religious ones, that get their pieces of public funds—and profit from them (meaning that they make more money than it should cost to do the work, as evidenced, for one thing, by the corporate CEO-scale salaries some pay).

Nonprofits, religious and secular, also enter into contracts with for-profits. Sometimes corporations set up nonprofits to get their tax breaks, and then get contracts from them. It's a cozy world of blurry boundaries, all fueled by public money.²

Contracting out government work has a long history in the United States and has supported many small businesses that do responsible work. But it is quite another thing when public work is

contracted out specifically in order to "shrink government," using privatization as a method to do so. These decisions are not made on the basis of careful assessment of real need, actual costs, and the availability of a corporation that is truly qualified in the area of work to be contracted out. The older forms of the practice were designed to support our government in doing its job of serving us. Today, privatizers seek to limit and weaken government—to make it dependent on corporations.

No matter what, though, contractors often lack knowledge in accomplishing military or other government jobs long done by public employees who have built up specialized expertise over their own years of work, and have had the benefit of a work culture that spreads and facilitates the transmission of that expertise. The death of twenty-two U.S. servicepeople in the Mosul, Iraq, bombing described at the beginning of this book is a tragic example of failure to bring to a job the essential, specific expertise it requires. Feeding troops in a war zone just isn't the same as setting up tents to feed guests at a big party.

Contracting can also become so habitual as a way to do business that it shades into the idea that government can pay a non-public person or group for *anything* an administration wants, including control of the news. In 2005, the conservative newspaper columnist and commentator Armstrong Williams was exposed as having accepted \$240,000 passed to him by the Department of Education and a private public relations firm—\$240,000 of taxpayers' money—not to report on but to *promote* the Bush administration's agenda. This secret bribing, and per-*version*, of a news source has been called "checkbook journalism": You want it, you buy it—with the public's money.³ No matter that this, shall we say, informal "contracting" is unethical, a conflict of interest, and that it is illegal to use federal money for "covert propaganda,"⁴ as the General Accountability Office has ruled in this and two other such cases during the Bush administration thus far. (Four others have also been exposed, and further instances are beginning to be uncovered.)

Want it done? Don't let governmental laws, rules, and regulations stop you. Pay a nongovernmental person to do it: Make it a contracting matter.

Even the best contractors who have signed on to do honest work must be supervised, of course. You don't hire someone to mind your kids and never check on him. It's not safe for a builder to contract out electrical work and never think about it again. So contracting out, which is usually said to be done to enhance efficiency and save taxpayers' money, actually requires more work and more of our money than it might seem. As an expert who has tracked privatizing by contracting out concludes, "The idea that transfer of responsibility from the public to the private sector allows government to withdraw from oversight, reduce staff, and place sole or even primary responsibility for accomplishment of public policy objectives on private service providers is an invitation to trouble."⁵

PARTNERSHIP

Public agencies and nongovernmental entities "partner" to set up quasi-public institutions or projects that are supposed to serve both their purposes.

A good example is the quasi-public Fannie Mae, which was set up to get public money to for-profit banks so they would make more mortgage deals with people who needed loans to buy their houses. This was an elaborate public-private deal that seemed to be good for both sectors and all of us. The pressure to make profits and control against losses to the bottom line that banks claimed kept them from making loans to some people was to be balanced by a government committed to affordable housing, a public good. And both banks and government were to do well financially to boot.

But as Fannie Mae got established and plump, it became far more like a heavily subsidized private corporation. Happens: For-profits are, precisely, for making profits. Furthermore, while the partnership holds, the public party to it is actually not only subsidizing the profits of its partner but getting special low interest rates. Government is handing over public funds, which are supposedly to be spent

on public services and goods (that's what we pay taxes for), but it is not getting anything like 100 percent public goods and services for that money. A lot of those public funds are making extraordinary executive packages and corporate profits possible. In short, the "result is a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose proposition for taxpayers. If Fannie . . . prosper[s], benefits go to shareholders; if [it] get[s] in trouble, government would almost certainly rescue [it]."⁶

In the case of Fannie Mae, in 2004 an accounting scandal was uncovered and its top executives were forced to resign. As is common among the rich and powerful, this wasn't your garden-variety firing, where you walk away with virtually nothing from the corporation that let you go (and if it weren't for government unemployment benefits, might be totally without income). The benefits Fannie Mae said it was offering its two officers, who were investigated for responsibility for scandalous accounting practices, "range from a \$1.4 million-a-year pension payment for life to former CEO Franklin Raines, 55, to stock options for Raines and former chief financial officer J. Timothy Howard, 56." The CEO of a research firm estimated Mr. Raines' pension plus stock options payout to be all together \$2.5 million a year.⁷

Some of these partnerships between government and private-sector businesses are even worse than the historic imbalance in marriage between men and women, itself a kind of contractual partnership. She stayed home and took care of the kids and did some underpaid office work to help put him through medical school. And when the marriage broke up, guess who walked away with more money, and the potential (underwritten by her) to make still more? If the two authors of this book, Elizabeth Minnich and Si Kahn, entered into a partnership with Donald Trump, we would be pretty foolish to think we had suddenly become his equal in power and wealth. Add our assets to his, and together the three of us are worth billions and billions. But we'd better not count on that partnership for our retirement, or on getting half the money if it breaks up. We feel much safer relying on Social Security.

LEASING

Leasing is making deals that allow profit-seeking businesses to exploit public goods, such as leasing national forests and wilderness areas to a corporation whose business is timber, natural gas, or oil. The argument here is that both the public and profit-making purses will benefit from leasing publicly owned land to a corporation that will "harvest" (read, cut down every tree in sight, a practice known in the timber industry as clear-cutting) and "extract" (read, strip-mine every inch of land) and sell what is on top of or under the land. Letting those national forests and wilderness areas *just sit there doing nothing* seems like such a waste, especially when there's this huge national debt to be reckoned with. Why not let those idle resources—the trees just standing there enjoying the wind, the oil and natural gas lying around underground doing who knows what—pay their way by sacrificing just a portion of their number for the financial good of human society?

Here's how it worked in Appalachia for decades, before the law was changed to a somewhat fairer system.⁸ The United States Forest Service owns vast percentages of many mountain counties, over 40 percent of the surface land in fourteen of them. Of course, the Forest Service, being part of the federal government, doesn't pay taxes on this land as a private landowner would.

Bad news for county government? Not at all, the Forest Service said. We make payments in lieu of taxes to every county in which these lands are located.

And how was the amount determined? Well, the Forest Service gave the county 25 percent of the income it received from selling standing timber (that's trees that haven't been cut down yet) to corporations and individuals to harvest. Fine in theory. The problem was that the Forest Service sold the standing timber—a public resource—at prices way below market value. Some counties got payments in lieu of taxes as little as twenty-two cents an acre. The corporations got a steal, and the public, the people of the county, got stolen from.

Like any contract or partnership between government and corporations, leasing can go bad. Big money out to make profits and the public good rarely make for an equal marriage.

SELLING OUTRIGHT

It's obvious: What was public is turned into a resource for profit making. Once privatized, a formerly public good or service is likely to be handled differently to cut costs and increase profits. And should that turn out to make the public need to take it back, there are serious problems. It is too expensive to buy it back or start it up anew, and in any case, government expertise and provisions to run it, provide for it, care for it have been lost.

The public—particularly less wealthy, under- and uninsured people—has depended on public hospitals. Where these have been privatized, sold off to private corporations, costs were cut—and guess where the quick and easy cuts were made? Privatizers and guess where the quick and easy cuts were made? Preventive care is also likely to be cut, or cut back: Hospitals that profit from having patients do not have a stake in keeping us well by offering low-ticket wellness services. Even privatized hospitals that want, or are required under the terms of the sale, to keep up preventive and charity services may not be able to afford them.

Furthermore, when a public hospital is sold to a religious organization, that religion's beliefs can be imposed on health care professionals they employ, and on their customers (which is what those in need of care have become, although customers without much choice). Catholic hospitals, for example, will not offer services in support of reproductive choice, particularly abortions and birth control. This might be their own business if the public could go elsewhere. But when public hospitals are sold to Catholic orders, they can become, as they have in Eugene, Oregon, just about the only show around. No religion should decide, on the basis of its own doctrine, what health care all of us can and cannot get.⁹

Selling off a public good or service can, then, significantly lessen fair, inclusive access to it because the need to profit (or to serve

other primary values, such as religious ones) can affect quality, scope, and kind of services offered.

DISINVESTMENT

Divestment means pulling out public funds so that public goods and services deteriorate or even fold, and can then be taken over or bought by for-profit corporations without public protest. Or, cutting back a public commitment to fund a service so far that those who are trying to run it are forced to seek money from the private sector. Private money means greater private control. *Disinvestment* (a polite term for breaking your word and going back on a commitment of public funds, much as *disinformation* is a polite term for lying) can also force responsible public officials to make deals with private for-profits even when they do not think it a good idea.

Disinvestment in education, for example, leads to the overcrowded, undersupplied classrooms that allow privatizers to say, "See? Public education is failing," and then further undercut those schools by offering vouchers to parents to send their children to private schools. In public universities, it leads to desperate administrators putting great pressure on faculty to bring in far grants or to work on projects under university-corporate partnership arrangements. Scholars must then look first for what might get funded, rather than to what we need and want to know.

Disinvestment can also be used against federal funding agencies. In early 2005, the Bush administration pulled back monies promised to the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), which had supported innovative programs. Authors of proposals that had already been approved for funding were suddenly told there would be no money after all. More people who might have improved education were forced to seek private funding—more private-sector control over education.

CREATING AND CONTROLLING MARKETS THAT REQUIRE PUBLIC FUNDING TO SERVE

One way privatization takes chunks out of public funds for the good of for-profit corporations is literally by creating public need

and demand. This takes time and determination, and often, collusion of various more or less open sorts, but indeed it can be and has been done.

Here's a dramatic example. Most major cities in the United States used to have a trolley system that provided relatively efficient, inexpensive, and nonpolluting public transportation. But, one by one, the trolley systems disappeared.

What happened to these sensible trolleys? Were they too slow for fast-moving modern people—lumbering dinosaurs whose time had come and gone? Too expensive to maintain? Obsolete in a world of subways and airplanes? Too cute for serious cities with powerful, high-powered people?

No, none of the above. The trolleys were doing just fine. The problem was that this public form of transportation competed directly and successfully with the emerging automotive and oil industries. Remember, the trolleys ran on electricity, not on oil or gasoline. So these corporations (including the Rockefeller oil corporations, Ford Motor Company, and Goodyear Tire and Rubber) simply bought up the public trolley systems and closed them down—wherever across the country they could.¹⁰

The profits made by the oil, car, and associated corporations are by now monstrously huge. Meanwhile, government has to build and maintain all those public roads we drive our cars on, provide traffic cops and all the paraphernalia, like stoplights, we need not to kill each other on the roads—and on and on, all the way to involving our government, including the military, in global struggles to keep the oil flowing.

These days, in Charlotte where we live, we are investing ever more tax money in trying to provide public transportation to get us out of those cars. Part of the plan includes—guess what? A public trolley system.

Now, let's be clear. We think having a public trolley system is totally great (partly, we have to admit, because there's a stop three blocks from our house). The trolley cars—lovingly rebuilt over many years by volunteers who were determined to convince the city to bring its trolleys back—are just beautiful. But because the

old trolley system was deliberately undermined and shut down, providing public transportation today is going to cost millions of our tax dollars. If the corporations hadn't worked to destroy the public transportation systems we had in the first place, we wouldn't as a city and as a nation be spending billions to rebuild them now from scratch.

The corporations that consciously worked to destroy this country's trolley systems take no responsibility for helping rebuild them. No surprise there, though. Remedying harms to the public good is not the corporations' business—even when they are the cause of those harms.

SUBSIDIES

Public monies—our tax dollars—are used to lower corporations' costs so they can continue to make, and grow, their profits. These range from so-called tax incentives to government purchases of land that are then offered to corporations that, if given sufficient incentives (that's the polite term for bribes), just might locate where jobs are needed, to tax breaks for the same reason, or to keep a corporation from moving elsewhere, to bailouts of faltering corporate giants—to military presence and actions, and today, ongoing U.S. presence and war in oil-rich regions of the world.

Subsidies are another reason corporations are interested in contracts, leasing, and partnering with the government. Public money or other goods (including credibility) is the dowry the bride brings that goes toward strengthening the groom's economic potential.¹¹

The reasons given for these more or less obvious bribes, collectively and politely called subsidies—or, a bit more honestly, corporate welfare—are various. Most of them, though, invoke the need for a now thoroughly corporate-dominated economy to keep growing. That these reasons have some truth to them makes a prime point about the privatizers' agenda. We and our government are being made so dependent on corporations that they call the shots, which is just what they want.

And we are encouraged to think that it is good for us and good for America to subsidize the very corporations that are taking away

our public powers and profiting from provisions for the public good. Matter of fact, we're not even supposed to notice that the difference between our country and the corporations is nowhere near as clear as it should be.

ENCLOSURE

The enclosing of what was free, held in common, shared, open to all, so that it becomes private, is a very basic form of privatization. It takes what was public and puts it in private hands. When settlers staked their claims on land the Native Americans had used but not owned, there were fierce conflicts. When ranchers built fences to keep the animals they raised in and other ranchers' animals out, they were turning open territory into private space. When farmers came along and fenced in more of the open territory that the ranchers had used to drive their stock to market, more struggles erupted.

Further back in history, in sixteenth-century England, the growth of the wool trade led to the enclosure—the fencing in—of what had been *commons*, land used in common by groups of people. This was a major change with serious economic, social, legal, and political consequences. The British government was pressed into service by the owners of the privatized land, and its powers were both used and increased on their behalf. For example, between 1688 and 1820, “the number of capital crimes in England increased from 50 to 220; almost all were related to crimes against property. Particularly notable was the imposition of the death penalty as punishment for writing anonymous letters to protest the enclosure of common lands.”¹²

Enclosure, then, is obviously related to freedom, and to claims to conflicting kinds of rights.

Freedom has many meanings, but basic to our experience of being free is that we can go where we want, say what we think, act as we will. Obviously there are constraints on these freedoms even when we have public rights that protect our ability to choose to exercise them. We can't go anywhere, say anything, do anything anytime we want to, because we are only human, and we are social,

moral creatures. We set limits on ourselves and on each other so that my freedom cannot be used to harm you, or to limit your freedom. But freedom is limited in a more concrete and telling way where private property becomes a right that outweighs almost all others.

Rights to own property are deeply valued in societies that have them. But they are also rights that can be, and have been, extended from land to all sorts of material things—and to other human beings, as with slavery. It's one thing to have a small farm you can own, fence in, post No Trespassing signs on, and use as you will; it's quite another thing to own slaves. Slave owners, we know from U.S. history, will then agitate for laws that enshrine and expand their “property” rights. When concentrated ownership becomes unjust, government can become party to its perversion.

Today, when corporations take over publicly owned lands and water, it's recognized as privatization. But this is connected to the older, more widespread taking over of what was open to all, and that is less often recognized. It should be recognized, because when the right to private ownership takes precedence over other basic rights of freedom, the sphere of our shared freedoms always shrinks.

For example, although our right to freedom of expression is protected against government restrictions by the Constitution, it is not fully protected against private owners. When someone owns property—like an apartment building, a mall, an amusement park, a retirement home—that person, or corporation, can refuse to let people holding views the owner disagrees with speak on the property, or speak about political issues at all.

Simply put, the less public space we have, the less freedom we have to exercise our public rights—and today public space is disappearing, being enclosed, at an accelerating pace.¹³ Look around you: How many new gated communities are going up? How many restricted housing developments? How many shopping malls? On the other hand, how many places in your community are still free and open to people who want to pass out leaflets asking people to join a union, work to elect a favorite candidate, carry a picket sign protesting injustice?

The loss of public space also means that the sphere of power of our government is shrinking. Government cannot enforce your right to free speech when you are on the private property of someone whose ownership rights the government protects. The government then serves its citizens as owners, rather than simply as *We the People*, whoever and wherever we are, whatever we have or do not have.

The decision to protect those who benefit from the enclosure of the commons (from land to air rights, from water to mineral rights, from knowledge and information to images and symbols) has long since been made in many countries. Private property is a deep cultural value, and very much a part of the way we lead our lives. But as privatization of all sorts spreads, a careful, equitable balance between our differing rights threatens to be lost in favor of those who own ever more, and can, where they have taken control, legally shut us out, shut us in, and deny us the expansive freedoms for which democracies were created.

In 1953, the words of the chair of General Motors, Charlie Wilson, made it into public folklore: "What's good for General Motors is good for America." In 2001, right after 9/11, General Motors proudly launched an advertising campaign for its cars based on the same premise. "Keep America rolling," it said.¹⁴

Ownership and consumerism as patriotism, patriotism as consumerism and ownership—not always an easy sell, but there are politicians as well as corporations working hard to convince us.

There is no such thing as a private democracy.

Who Is Not Served by Privatization?

Si is an organizer. Organizers, like all craftspeople, have a tool kit, a set of physical and intellectual resources they turn to for help when they know what's happening but not why. If organizers or any other people don't understand why something is happening, any effort to change what's going on is likely to lead them and us in many wrong directions.

A key question organizers ask is, "Who does it serve?" Actually, it should be, "Whom does it serve," but organizers, like politicians, pride themselves on being plainspoken and tend to avoid certain technically correct grammatical constructions if they think using these forms might make them appear too pretentious. For example, most organizers would never use the preceding sentence in public.

Sometimes, to figure out whom something serves, organizers look around to figure out, first, whom it does *not* serve. Here's a list of those privatization has *not* served.

COMMUNITIES

People tend to be loyal to the community in which they live. Corporations tend to be loyal only to themselves, meaning their executives, board members, and of course, their largest shareholders, many of which are also loyal to other corporations, from which they profit. (Just to thicken the mix as much as possible, some of the largest shareholders *are* other corporations). When people leave a community, they sell their house to someone else. When corporations leave, there's often nothing left but the empty building where people used to work—and a lot of "For Sale" signs in front of the houses of the people who used to have jobs in the now empty building.

TAXPAYERS

The basic argument privatizers use to promote their agenda is that it saves the public money. Those who favor privatization do studies proving that it saves money; those who oppose it do others proving the opposite. What is perfectly clear is that, even if major privatization takes place, and even if the quality of service goes down, taxes usually remain the same. The difference is that more of those public funds go into private corporate pockets.¹⁵

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Corporations have learned an important if obvious lesson: If you pay people less, and if you pay less people, you can keep more of the

money for yourself. When public services are privatized, it's common to terminate most if not all of the public employees who worked there. Those who are hired back, and those who are hired to replace those who lose their jobs permanently, almost always have lower wages or salaries and benefits than when those jobs were public. The individual, the family, and the community are all poorer for it, in many senses of the word.

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

When people have less money to spend, guess where they spend even less of it? People with a little extra disposable income can afford to support their small neighborhood and community businesses. People living on the financial edge, however they may feel about Wal-Mart, end up shopping there.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Just as people who've lost part of their income are likely to have to transfer their business from small neighborhood stores to the Big Boxes, they're also less able to contribute financially to community organizations. Plus, because they're likely to have to take on a second job to make ends meet, they have less time to volunteer for good causes and organizations—assuming they don't have to leave town to find a new job.

MILITARY PERSONNEL

Privatization of the military has meant that employees of private security corporations working in war zones make as much as or more than \$100,000 a year—again, that's our tax dollars—while some of our enlisted women and men on the front lines of battle don't even have the equipment to protect themselves. Their families and friends back home hold fundraising drives to buy body armor so that their loved ones have at least a better chance of getting home alive and in one piece. And family, friends, and neighbors pitch in to help military families too, because the pay is so low that life is otherwise very hard indeed.¹⁶

PEOPLE IN PRISON

For-profit private prisons have meant higher levels of prison violence, fewer educational and training resources, a higher probability of being incarcerated a long way from home, and so less chance to turn your life around. We all lose when that fails. To people in prisons add people who suffer from the crimes committed by those who have already been incarcerated and came out more hardened, more desperate—or just unemployed in a world where no job means no money, no food, no chance. With over two million people already in prison, and many more millions in their families, the United States can't afford the pressure to expand incarceration created by the private prison industry.

If neither taxpayers, public employees, communities, community organizations, small business owners, military personnel, nor people in prison or the victims of crime benefit from privatization—which is to say, most of the people who live in the United States—why are we doing it? Who/whom does it serve? Privatization serves corporations.

Now, that's not the official line, of course. To hear some elected officials talk about privatization, you'd think it was the best thing since sliced bread. It's Mom, apple pie, and the Fourth of July all over again. These politicians and their corporate allies present privatization as a sort of miracle ingredient that will cure much of what's wrong with society and government.

Let's take society first. Are the leading advocates for privatization—which is to say, the major political and economic conservatives in this country—really sincere when they claim that privatizing will build a better society by improving services to the poor and needy? Since when have conservatives (compassionate or not) tended to make the spending of money needed to ensure quality public services for the less fortunate the centerpiece of their time in office? Compare the following two lists and think which of these groups benefited most from conservative-led efforts to move

public funds, through privatization and other means, to contingencies they care about:

First group: single working mothers; homeless families; poor and working people; people with HIV/AIDS; disabled veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq; inner-city schoolchildren; rural communities threatened by environmental disasters; day care workers and the women who can't take or keep jobs without them; skilled workers unemployed because of changes in technology; minimum wage workers; below-minimum-wage workers; workers with disabilities; immigrants fleeing political turmoil in their home countries.

Second group: energy corporations, defense corporations, mining corporations, natural gas corporations, timber corporations, agribusiness corporations, pharmaceutical corporations, aerospace corporations, oil corporations, private military corporations.

Also in the *second group:* individuals and families of wealth. (We don't want to suggest that conservatives only care about corporations and have no regard for individuals or some families' value.) To think that the reason conservative political leaders want to privatize is so that the most vulnerable will be empowered by being treated more equally is to ignore a long, sad, and painful history. If you believe these leaders want to privatize because of their deep humanitarian concerns, we have a bridge we'd like to sell you.

Another dubious miracle claim is that privatization will fix much of what's wrong with the government, which is where we're supposed to put the blame for any troubles we have.

Organizers, though, also ask where the power is that keeps the benefits flowing in one direction and not others. Elected officials, people often say. Okay, but who and what are they using their power for? Most of the elected officials who are working so hard to promote privatization aren't trying to improve government. They're not working to make government agencies more accountable, or public employees more responsible.

They're trying to do two things. First, they're trying to move as high a percentage of public funds (meaning the money from your taxes) into the pockets of corporations and individual people of

wealth (among whom they are planning to be, if they aren't already).

If the rest of us are judged by the company we keep, these officials should be judged by the companies that keep them.

Here's the second thing privatizers are trying to do. They're aiming to destroy independent, democratic government itself.

Well, let's not exaggerate. Antitax activist and Republican political strategist Grover Norquist said only that he wanted to make government so small he could haul it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.¹⁷

When people meeting together to figure out what's going on and why they're hurting begin to put the pieces together, they realize that Grover Norquist was not joking. Neither were spokespeople for Governor Mark Sanford when they suggested that administration could run South Carolina with one thousand public employees. Nor was Governor Jeb Bush when he envisioned a Florida in which the buildings that used to house public employees stood empty.

These elected officials are not just indulging in the time-honored American tradition of bashing government and public employees. They are operating in a conscious, very disciplined manner. Their actions speak as loudly, and are every bit as arrogant, antidemocracy, as their words.

It's actually not hard at all to figure out what they're trying to do. They're *telling* us—but they're also telling us that it is for our own good—that the very government we elected them to is what we should watch them drown in their bathtub.

The rationale for letting the foxes take over? Well, if we have foxes guarding the henhouse, we're told, we'll be safe from all those rogue predators out there in the wicked world. These will be *our* foxes—so forget that foxes, too, are predators. Predator foxes just love chickens, so we'll be safe with them.

And we should feel even more secure when the Guardian Foxes invite some of their kin to go right on into the henhouse. Lovers of chickens that they are, they'll provide for our needs far more efficiently and effectively, we are assured, than that old bungler, that

bleeding heart Uncle Sam who thinks he should feed even the scrawniest, even the sickest and smallest chicken in his flock. If the Guardian Foxes have to take some risks, such as culling some of the chickens who are less likely to make it so that the others may flourish, or raiding other henhouses, then we can only admire them for their leadership and willingness to make the really hard decisions.

A terrible thing, that: Uncle Sam forgot that his one and only role as farmer is to plump up chickens to be sold, thereby making the money on which the world runs. He went and fell for those chickens, started caring about them, and refused to leave them unguarded against the foxes. (He had some help from the chickens in this change of heart, of course: Organized chickens had done a lot of squawking.) With his handouts, Farmer Sam has turned his chickens into dependents and cheats. Let the Guardian Foxes stand their watch, let their crony foxes into the henhouse, and the chickens will be liberated.

As Little Red Riding Hood said to the foxes' brother, the Big Bad Wolf, when he clothed himself in her grandmother's nightgown and cap and pulled the covers up to his chin, "My, what big teeth you have, Grandma." "All the better to eat you with, my dear," said the rather more honest wolf.



PRIVATIZATION AT WORK

IN MEMORIAM

BRIAN TETRAULT was forty-four when he was led into a dim county jail cell in upstate New York in 2001, charged with taking some skis and other items from his ex-wife's home. A former nuclear scientist who had struggled with Parkinson's disease, he began to die almost immediately, and state investigators would later discover why: the jail's medical director had cut off all but a few of the thirty-two pills he needed each day to quell his tremors.

Over the next ten days, Mr. Tetrault slid into a stupor, soaked in his own sweat and urine. But he never saw the jail doctor again, and the nurses dismissed him as a faker. After his heart finally stopped, investigators said, correction officers at the Schenectady jail doctored records to make it appear he had been released before he died. . . . Investigators concluded [that] the culprit was a for-profit corporation, Prison Health Services, that had moved aggressively into New York State in the last decade, winning jail contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars with an enticing sales pitch: Take the messy and expensive job of providing medical care from overmatched government officials, and give it to an experienced nationwide outfit. . . . A yearlong examination of Prison Health Services by the *New York Times* reveals repeated instances of medical care that has been flawed and sometimes lethal.¹