

# |||||THE BIG SELLOUT

## SYNOPSIS

THE BIG SELLOUT is a political film. In various episodes the abstract phenomenon of privatisation is depicted in stories about very concrete human destinies around the globe. The documentary tells tragic, tragicomic but also encouraging stories of the everyday life of people, who day by day have to deal with the effects of privatisation politics, dictated by anonymous international financial institutions in Washington D.C. and Geneva, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In his film, author and director FLORIAN OPITZ reveals the reality of the privatised and globalised world, which is supposed to be effective and shiny. He examines the effects of THE BIG SELLOUT, the worldwide privatisation of basic public services, such as water supply, electricity, public transportation, and even public health care. In South America, Asia, Africa, but also in Europe and the United States, OPITZ meets people, for whom these promises are nothing more than hollow phrases. And what he finds is that THE BIG SELLOUT has only just begun.

FLORIAN OPITZ talks to the architects of the new economic world order, as well as to ordinary people who have to deal with the politics of the former. He tells the story of a South African activist who helps poor families in Soweto, who are disconnected from electricity by the to-be privatised electricity supplier ESKOM, because they cannot afford to pay the high electricity bills anymore. Hunted by the Police and the company's security he and his team of guerilla electricians reconnect these families back, illegally.

Another storyline is about a Philippine mother living with her family in a slum area in Metro-Manila. For years now she has been struggling to find money to pay for the dialysis, her son needs twice a week. If she doesn't succeed until the end of the week, her son will die.

A humorous British train driver and union activist is the protagonist of the third episode. Having proudly started his career in the most efficient railway system in Europe, some years later he finds himself in a privatised, totally fragmented, and run down industry whose service regularly collapses. He is constantly fighting for his colleagues who have been facing more and more pressure from their private employers over the recent years. Pressure that has already lead to a numerous deadly accidents in the British railway system.

Last but not least, THE BIG SELLOUT tells us about the fight of the Bolivian citizens of Cochabamba against an US-corporation that had tried to take over the municipal water supply. The tempted takeover lead to the first "water war" in human history, in which tens of thousands Bolivian citizens fought against the Bolivian police and military.

Although depicting the tragic privatisation failures all over the world there is a lot of hope in the episodes. In a desperate situation that seems to have no alternative to a „survival of the fittest“ mentality, people unite and stand up against a seemingly all-powerful enemy.



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In the documentary, Joseph Stiglitz, one of the world's best known economists and Nobel Prize winner for economy makes the viewer understand where the dogma of privatisation came from, who profits from it, and what societies lose, when following it blindly. As refined former director of the World Bank, he comes from the world of financial institutions, but today he is fighting for the losers of the privatisation process, triggered by these same organizations.

THE BIG SELLOUT is a very special film: The different storylines of the film are not narrated one after the other, but woven together and carefully intertwined in a thrilling, episodal structure that is as compelling as truthful, and results in a film that is even more exciting than the sum of its parts.

