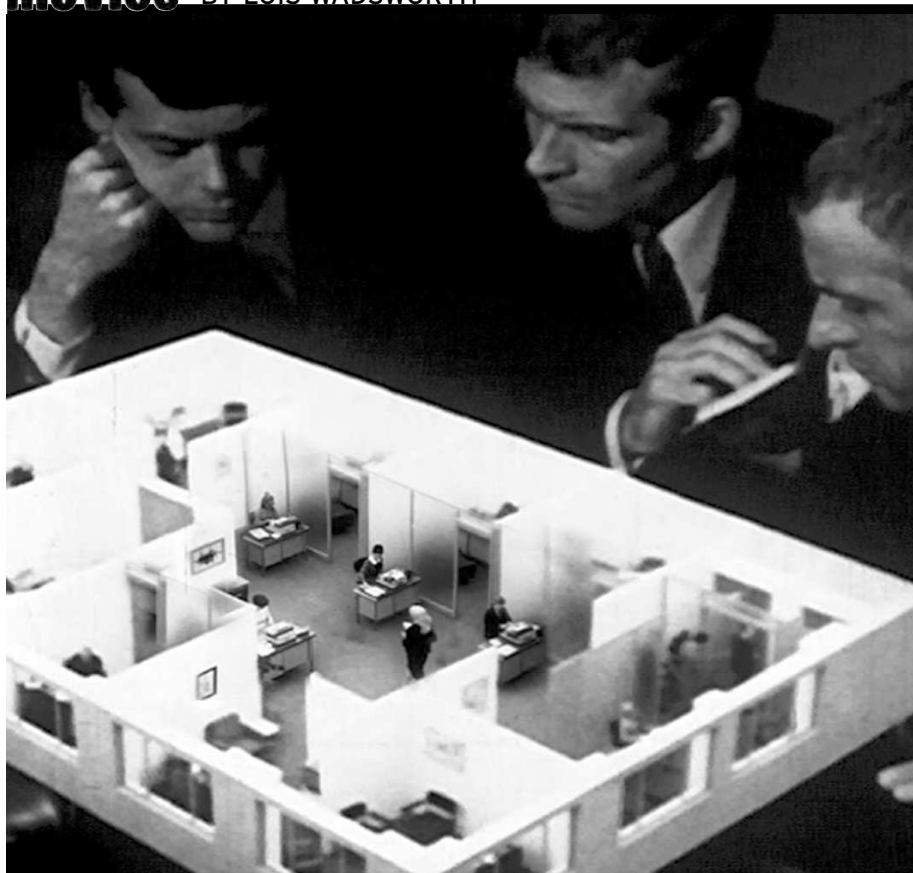




BIG PICTURE MEDIA CORPORATION, 2004.

Pathology, Power and Profit

Corporate qualities

THE CORPORATION (Canada): Documentary. Directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott. Produced by Achbar and Bart Simpson. Written by Joel Balcan, based on his book, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*. Narration written by Harold Crooks and Mark Achbar. Cinematography: Jeff Koffman, Kirk Tougas, Rolf Cutts. Editor, Jennifer Abbott. Music, Leonard J. Paul. Includes commentary by Noam Chomsky, Michael Moore, Ray Anderson and appearances by many others. Zeitgeist Films release, 2004. NR. 145 minutes. Winner 2004 Sundance Documentary Audience Award.

The professional quality of *The Corporation* amplifies its almost scholarly approach to the deconstruction of the dominant institution of our time — the corporation. Looking at the corporation from historical, psychoanalytical, economic and social perspectives, the first half of the film achieves its goal of educating us to the powerful forces and resources today's corporations wield. In its second half, the film suggests that just as the greedy, stupid giants of fairy tales could be outwitted by a much smaller adversary, so, too, corporate power brokers can be brought to account by the people. It's a call to educated activism.

Using checkpoints from *The Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disabilities*, the filmmakers create a psychological profile of the corporation as psychopathic. Through one example after another, the legal corporate person is shown to be deceitful; possessing a reckless disregard for the safety of others; unable to form lasting relationships; self-absorbed and manipulative; incapable of experiencing guilt; lawless; not empathic; unable to feel. If this were not only a legal person but a human person as well, we would insist on incarceration. And throw away the key!

Corporations pay negligible fines when they're caught polluting, bullying or defrauding the public. It's the cost of doing business. And it's less expensive than fixing what's wrong. But corpora-

tions actually want to own everything — everything on earth, under the sea and the earth, the very air we breathe. Now they're testing new limits as they patent life forms and privatize rainwater.

I was glad to see *The Corporation* put the screws to my least favorite corporate thugs, Monsanto. I grew up in a part of Texas now referred to as "the petrochemical Gulf Southwest." When I was a child, dolphins played in the waters of Galveston Bay. But that was before Monsanto, Union Carbide, Pan American Oil and a few other bad neighbors left their indelible marks in the air, water and soil we called home.

These days, Monsanto has turned its focus to biological manipulation such as bovine growth hormones for cows that don't need to make more milk, and infertile, patented seeds for one-time crops in third world countries. Mucking around with the biological code of life — which has worked really well on its own so far — ought to be punishable by exile to one of Saturn's moons.

Ray Anderson, CEO of the world's largest carpet manufacturer, Interface, tells how Paul Hawken's book, *The Ecology of Commerce*, turned his corporate head around. He had the emotional realization that he was a plunderer, and he vowed to change his corporation's relationship to people and resources. Anderson's newfound enthusiasm for sustainable production is both effective and infectious.

Small victories over corporate policies make us rejoice, and the possibility of change tempts us to hope. But such outcomes depend on people becoming savvy consumers, eager recyclers and dedicated, smart activists. Choose wisely the fight to put your energy into, and then move that mountain. *The Corporation* is highly recommended; now playing at Cinema World.

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