



The Fox in the Henhouse: How Privatization Threatens Democracy

Si Kahn, Elizabeth Minnich

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Privatization has been on the right-wing agenda for years, but now it has the power of the Bush administration behind it. Health care, schools, Social Security, public lands, the military, prisons--all are considered fair game. But does privatization really serve the public good? Or is it a payoff to powerful corporations intent on replacing the government with a "private profit culture," in which there is no meaningful public accountability and the bottom line rules all? In this powerful book, legendary activist Si Kahn and public philosopher Elizabeth Minnich argue that privatization is a threat whose seriousness few appreciate.

Kahn and Minnich expose the damage privatization has done in several specific areas of society, as well as to society as a whole. They argue that corporations are, by their very nature, unable to effectively fulfill what have traditionally been the responsibilities of government. Some things that are worth doing simply can't, indeed shouldn't, be done purely for profit. Unless there is a balance between the public and private sectors, vulnerable populations will be chronically underserved and critical public functions will be under-funded to the point of virtual elimination.

Privatization is usually dealt with in dry economic terms, but Kahn and Minnich take an unusual and lively approach to the issue. Combining stories, analysis, impassioned argument, and even song lyrics, they discuss how the concept of privatization has evolved and look at the different forces that work for and against it, emphasizing the extreme anti-government ideology motivating many privatization advocates. And they outline principles and practices for combating privatization and its proponents.

The Fox in the Henhouse makes a powerful case that the market is not the measure of all things, and that a vital public sector is an indispensable component of a healthy democracy.

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