

A Case Study In Capitalist Democracy: “You’ve been Trumped”

Review of Anthony Baxter's 2012 documentary

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If you have not yet watched the documentary ‘You’ve been Trumped’ (2012) by Anthony Baxter, you should try to. It’s a film about how money and power, with the collusion of politicians, the media and the instruments of state, have complete contempt for and ride roughshod over ordinary people. It’s a lesson in how capitalist ‘democracy’ functions.

Here is the synopsis.

A group of proud Scottish homeowners take on a celebrity tycoon. At stake is one of Britain’s very last stretches of wilderness. US billionaire Donald Trump has bought up hundreds of acres on the northeast coast of Scotland. Trump needs to get some locals to move out of their homes to make the deal come true. He is going to build two golf courses alongside a 450-room hotel and 1,500 luxury homes. The trouble is the land he has purchased occupies one of Europe’s most environmentally sensitive stretches of coast and sand dunes, described by one leading scientist as Scotland’s Amazon rain forest. The handful of local residents who reside there don’t want to move out or have the land destroyed.

Despite the local council rejecting the proposal, the Scottish Government overturns its own environmental laws to give Trump the green light. This causes much consternation as the area is a designated ‘Site of Special Scientific Interest’. As the bulldozers spring into action to demolish the dunes and dig up the land, local residents’ water and power is cut off, land disputes erupt, and some residents have mountains of earth piled up next to their homes to try to force them out. Complaints go ignored by the police, who instead arrest the film’s director, Anthony Baxter. Apparently, filming in public constitutes a ‘breach of the peace’! The police are firmly in Trump’s court.

Adding insult to injury, Trump also gets an honorary doctorate from a local university, even as his tractors turn wild, untouched dunes into fairways.

‘You’ve Been Trumped’ encapsulates the chasm between the powerful, glamorous, jet-setting Donald Trump and a deeply rooted, relatively powerless Scottish community. For Trump, the golf course is just another money-making deal. For the residents, it represents the destruction of a globally unique landscape that has been the backdrop for their lives and an eventual influx of rich foreigners who will jet in and out for a quick round or two on their newly constructed millionaire playground.

The film raises issues that strike at the very heart of democracy. Seduced by Trump’s wealth, it’s the politicians, the media, much of the business community, a local university

and the police that cow-tow to the billionaire. The police are his protector. Politicians overturn their own laws in the face of dubious promises of jobs, which are never genuinely investigated by them to see if they actually stand up to scrutiny.

Someone like Trump does not get to where they are without knowing how to play the media, or the politicians for that matter. The film shows his half truths, untruths, tacky PR gloss and ridiculous slurs against local residents who stand in his way are taken as facts by much of the media and many of those in authority. The rich have the knack of talking absolute rubbish, but say it with utter conviction that it becomes accepted as 'fact'. That much was clear in the film.

'You've been Trumped' shows what most of us already know: money talks and officialdom – often 'public servants' – listens and looks the other way when the ordinary people they are supposed to serve end up paying the price.

The film is a depressing case study of how the 'one per cent' is able to control the world for its own benefit. Acting alone, the Trumps of this world exert enormous power.

But when they come together to forward a collective agenda, their influence is even more grotesque. Look no further than the International Crisis Group. Trilateral Commission, Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institute and any other number of bodies populated, funded or controlled by big corporate interests on behalf of supremely wealthy individuals. Forget about the power of one billionaire to exert his influence in Scotland. Forget about one Donald Trump ever becoming US president. We already have a plethora of multi-billionaire interests dictating national and international policies!

Although Trump now has his golf course, something positive can be taken from the film: the spirit of ordinary people and their fortitude in standing up to money, wealth and power and its corrupting influences. They may not have prevented Trump's scheme, but residents stood firm in the face of intimidation and threats. And they garnered the support of thousands of local people who knew wrong when they saw it.

What happened in Scotland is on one level similar to what is taking place right now in other parts of the world, not least in India: the corruption of democracy by power and wealth.

Thousands of ordinary people have been protesting against the building of nuclear plants in India. Notwithstanding safety concerns, unconstitutional land grabs resulting in people being booted off their lands have acquired headline status. The full force of the state has been brought to bear on protesters via police and paramilitary violence and intimidation.

In South India for example, local people are peacefully protesting against the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant. More than 56,000 have been falsely charged, including 6,000 for the offence of 'sedition'. 53 have been imprisoned.

Why? Again, because of the influence of money; because of unaccountable power.

India's expanding multi-billion dollar nuclear sector represents rich pickings for the key players both within India and abroad. The Indian government has agreed to buy US\$150 billion worth of nuclear reactors, equipment and other materials from the US, whose companies will benefit for decades from Indian orders for military equipment. It has also promised various other countries that their companies will receive lucrative contracts in

India. The French company Areva, US companies GE Hitachi and Westinghouse and the Russian company Atomstroy export are all building nuclear plants in the country. In return, the US lobbied to allow India to engage in civilian nuclear trade, despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

What is happening concerning the expansion of nuclear sector is however symptomatic of the wider situation in India. Anti-nuclear activist Neeraj Jain says the Indian elite's vision for the country is to freely allow Western multinationals to access the Indian market and hand over thousands of hectares of land to them to set up projects like mines, refineries, airports, shopping malls and expressways, while dispossessing people from their mineral-rich lands in rural areas, and demolishing slums in urban areas.

Some like to call this 'progress'. Others choose to call it 'development'.

But let's state it for what it actually is: self-serving, powerful, wealthy elite interests acting in collusion with politicians and demonstrating utter contempt for democracy and ordinary folk.

Whether we live in Scotland, India or elsewhere, it begs the question: Are we willing to be 'Trumped' on a massive scale?

Well, that all depends on us, the 99 per cent, and what we are prepared to do about it.

You've been Trumped trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_Gq2kj4ryg

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