



# THE CORPORATE COUP D'ÉTAT

**WORLD PREMIERE IDFA 2018**

Director: **Fred Peabody**

Producer: **Peter Raymont**

Executive Producers: **Peter Raymont, Fred Peabody, Steve Ord, Jeff Cohen, Hans Robert Eisenhauer**

Featuring: **Chris Hedges, John Ralston Saul, Cornel West, Sarah Jaffe, Lee Fang, Maude Barlow, Phillip Martin**

**RT: 90 Minutes**

Produced by **White Pine Pictures** and **Ventana-Film** in association with **Super Channel, ZDF/ARTE, YLE**, with the participation of **Ontario Creates, Telefilm Canada**, the **Rogers Group of Funds through the Theatrical Documentary Program**, with the assistance of **The Park Foundation** and the **Government of Canada**  
International Sales Agent **Films Transit**

The Corporate Coup d'État is a sponsored project of IFP ([www.ifp.org](http://www.ifp.org))

## **MARKETING CONTACT**

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## **LOGLINE**

Donald Trump is not the disease, but the symptom of a bankrupt U.S. democracy that began selling its soul to big corporations decades ago.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Donald Trump and right-wing populist movements around the world are the logical result of a creeping, corporate coup d'état that has taken over established political parties, both "liberal" and "conservative".

This film tells the story of how the coup happened and shows its disastrous effects on society's most vulnerable citizens.

The corporate coup d'état has been devastating for people in "sacrifice zones" like the U.S. Rust Belt and Camden, New Jersey, where the film captures heart-breaking stories of citizens suffering from the effects of corporatist, globalist, and neo-liberal ideologies and policies.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

A democracy should protect its citizens, especially the most vulnerable among them, but increasingly the United States is failing to do so. This investigative and persuasive documentary blends the insights of philosophers, authors and journalists with the experiences of citizens of the Rust Belt in the U.S. Midwest, where the steel industry once flourished, but where closures and outsourcing have left urban areas desolate and hopeless. It's here that Donald Trump finds some of his most fervent supporters, as he's not considered part of the hated Washington establishment.

Journalist Chris Hedges, argues that the crisis predates Donald Trump's election by many years. Like his source of inspiration, the Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul, Hedges regards Trump as the symptom rather than the disease. Decades ago, U.S. democracy began selling its soul to big corporations. Lobbyists and corporatism took control in Washington, gradually undermining the will of the people. Journalist Naomi Klein recently described Trump's administration as a "corporate coup d'état". Hedges and Ralston Saul argue that the real coup took place long before.

## SUBJECTS FROM THE FILM (SELECTED)



### CHRIS HEDGES, Journalist

*"Donald Trump is not an anomaly. He is the grotesque visage of a collapsed democracy. The creeping corporate coup d'état that began 45 years ago is complete. It has destroyed the lives of tens of millions of Americans no longer able to find work that provides a living wage, cursed to live in chronic poverty."*

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a *New York Times* best-selling author and a professor. Hedges has worked for a decade teaching in prisons in New Jersey. He has become a fierce critic of mass incarceration in the United States.

Hedges books include *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction; *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (2009); *Death of the Liberal Class* (2010); *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (2012), written with cartoonist Joe Sacco, which was a *New York Times* best-seller; *Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt* (2015); and his most recent *America: The Farewell Tour* (2018).



### JOHN RALSTON SAUL, Philosopher

*"It could be argued that we are now in the midst of a coup d'état in slow motion. Democracy is weakening, corporatism is strengthening. Yet none of us has chosen this route for our society in spite of which our elites, quite happily, continue down it."*

John Ralston Saul is a Canadian writer, political philosopher, and public intellectual. He is a champion of freedom of expression and was the President of PEN International.

Saul's work is known as thought-provoking and ahead of its time, leading him to be called a "prophet" by *Time* magazine and to be included in *Utne Reader's* list of the world's leading thinkers and visionaries. He has received many national and international awards for his writing, including the World Prize of Humanism by the Ohrid Academy of Humanism in Macedonia.

Saul's best-known work is the international bestseller *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West* (1992). His more recent books include *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World* (2005) and *The Comeback: How Aborigines Are Reclaiming Power and Influence* (2014).



### **SARAH JAFFE, Author**

Sarah Jaffe is an author and independent journalist covering labor, economic justice, social movements, politics, gender, and pop culture. She is the author of *Necessary Trouble: Americans in Revolt*.

Jaffe's work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, and many other publications. She was one of the first reporters to cover the Occupy Wall Street and Fight for \$15 movements.



### **CORNEL WEST, Philosopher**

*"Donald Trump is the culminating figure of the logic of the corporate coup d'état because he's in the back pockets of the financial elite."*

Cornel West is an American philosopher, political activist, social critic, author, and public intellectual. West focuses on the role of race, gender, and class in American society and the means by which people act and react to their "radical conditionedness."

The recipient of more than 20 honorary degrees and an American Book Award, West has written or contributed to over twenty published books. Among his most influential books are *Race Matters* (1994) and *Democracy Matters* (2004).



### **LEE FANG, Journalist**

Lee Fang is an American journalist with a long-standing interest in how public policy is influenced by organized interest groups and big money. He is currently an investigative reporter at the online publication *The Intercept*. Previously, he was a reporting fellow at The Nation Institute and a contributing writer at *The Nation*.

Fang was the first to uncover and detail the role of the billionaire Koch brothers in financing the Tea Party movement. His interviews and research on the Koch brothers have been featured on HBO's *"The Newsroom,"* and the documentaries *"Merchants of Doubt"* and *"Citizen Koch."*



### **PHILLIP MARTIN, Journalist**

Phillip Martin is Senior Investigative Reporter for WGBH News and a contributing reporter to PRI's *The World*, a co-production of WGBH, the BBC and PRI – a program, which he helped develop as a Senior Producer in 1995.

Martin is the recipient of the Society of Professional Journalists 2017 Sigma Delta Chi award for Best Investigative Reporting and the 2014 national Edward R. Murrow Award for Best Investigative Reporting (large-market radio). He was also honoured with 2013 New York Festivals and United Nations UNDPI Gold Awards. He was part of a team of reporters that was honoured in 2002 with a George Foster Peabody Award to NPR for coverage of the September 11th terrorist attacks.



### **MATT TAIBBI, Journalist**

Matt Taibbi is one of the sharpest and most acerbic writers covering politics today. His books take on major injustices facing the United States and the world.

His latest books include *Insane Clown President: Dispatches from the 2016 Circus* (2017) and *I Can't Breathe: A Killing on Bay Street* (2017).

Taibbi's writing in *Rolling Stone* has earned him accolades for his relentless pursuit of the actors behind the late 2000s financial meltdown. It was his description of Goldman Sachs as "a great vampire squid relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money" that was taken up as a banner image of the crisis' villains. That work on the financial crisis was captured in his 2010 book, *Griftopia: Bubble Machines, Vampire Squids, and the Long Con That Is Breaking America*.

Taibbi's other books contain the same sharp investigative instincts, including his much praised *The Great Derangement: A Terrifying True Story of War, Politics, and Religion*. In 2008 Taibbi won the National Magazine Award for his column in *Rolling Stone*, where he continues his scathing, insightful writing to this day.



### **MAUDE BARLOW, Author**

Author and activist Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, a citizens' advocacy organization with members and chapters across Canada. She is also the co-founder of the Blue Planet Project, which works internationally for the human right to water. Barlow chairs the board of Washington-based Food & Water Watch, is a founding member of the San Francisco-based International Forum on Globalization, and a Councillor with the Hamburg-based World Future Council. In 2008/2009, she served as Senior Advisor on Water to the United Nations

General Assembly and was a leader in the campaign to have water recognized as a human right by the UN. Barlow has authored and co-authored 16 books.



### **GAR ALPEROVITZ, Economist & Historian**

Gar Alperovitz is an American historian, political economist, activist, writer, and government official. For fifteen years, he served as the Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, and is a former Fellow of Kings College, Cambridge University; Harvard's Institute of Politics; the Institute for Policy Studies; and a Guest Scholar at the Brookings Institution.

Alperovitz is the author of critically-acclaimed books on the atomic bomb and atomic diplomacy. His articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *The Atlantic*.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - FRED PEABODY

***THE CORPORATE COUP D'ÉTAT*** is a logical follow-up, and a broadening and deepening of themes raised in my 2016 film ***ALL GOVERNMENTS LIE: Truth, Deception, and the Spirit of I. F. Stone***.

For seven years I was a producer-director on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's award-winning investigative TV program "*The Fifth Estate*". I became aware of the limitations of working for U.S. mainstream media when I took a producer job in New York with "*ABC News 20/20*". I have seen from "inside the beast" the obsession executive producers of journalistic programs on American networks have with ratings.

At age 19, I subscribed to a 4-page weekly newsletter written by the late, great independent journalist I.F. Stone. *I.F. Stone's Weekly* was an inspiration to me and so many others. In 2013 I decided to try to make a documentary feature about Stone and the journalists following in his footsteps, carrying on his courageous example of independent, investigative, adversarial journalism.

I was fortunate to team up with producers Jeff Cohen and Peter Raymont, who also read *I.F. Stone's Weekly* in their teens. A three-word quote from Stone gave us our film's title, and our subtitle paid tribute to him. ***ALL GOVERNMENTS LIE: Truth, Deception, and the Spirit of I.F. Stone*** received a standing ovation when it premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2016. It was later nominated for an Emmy Award. This film led me to the idea for my new feature documentary, ***THE CORPORATE COUP D'ÉTAT***, which examines larger systemic problems that threaten not just a free press, but all aspects of democracy, and, indeed, our very survival on the planet.

Noted Toronto author John Ralston Saul was ahead of his time when he observed: "*It could be argued that we are now in the midst of a coup d'état in slow motion. Democracy is weakening; few people would disagree. Corporatism is strengthening; you only have to look around you. Yet none of us has chosen this route for our society, in spite of which our elites quite happily continue down it... Certainly corporatism is creating a conformist society. It is a modern form of feudalism.*"

Saul's visionary insight has never been more true. As Pulitzer-winning journalist and author Chris Hedges (who often quotes Saul) said recently: "*Donald Trump is not an anomaly. He is the grotesque visage of a collapsed democracy. The creeping corporate coup d'état that began 45 years ago is complete. It has destroyed the lives of tens of millions of Americans no longer able to find work that provides a living wage, cursed to live in chronic poverty.*"

I wanted to make a film that reaches out to the world with a powerful cinematic treatment of the above core message. I feel that ***THE CORPORATE COUP D'ÉTAT*** is a film that is urgently needed. I hope that it will make a difference.

## THE FILMMAKERS

### **FRED PEABODY, Director/ Executive Producer**

Vancouver based Fred Peabody is an Emmy-winning journalist and filmmaker. His credits include seven years as a producer-director on the acclaimed CBC investigative program "*The Fifth Estate*". Peabody's film on the childhood exploitation of the Dionne quintuplets was nominated for an Emmy in 1998, and he won an Emmy in 1989 for a film about wild horses rescued from starvation and abuse. Peabody's previous film *All Governments Lie: Truth, Deception and the Spirit of I.F. Stone* was honoured with the Directors Guild of Canada Award for Best Documentary and screened in over 70 festivals worldwide.

### **PETER RAYMONT, Producer/Executive Producer**

Emmy-Award winning filmmaker, journalist and writer Peter Raymont has produced and directed more than 100 documentary films and series during his 47 year career. Raymont's films are informed with a passion for human rights and social justice, and are regularly broadcast on TV networks worldwide. Many of Raymont's films expose flaws and weaknesses in the mainstream news media. His documentary feature, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* won the 2005 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award for World Cinema Documentaries, and the 2007 Emmy Award for Best Documentary. Raymont's documentary feature *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman*, was short-listed for an Academy Award.

## CREDITS

Director: **Fred Peabody**

Producer: **Peter Raymont**

Executive Producers: **Peter Raymont, Fred Peabody, Steve Ord, Jeff Cohen, Hans Robert Eisenhauer**

Editor: **James Yates**

Cinematographer: **John Westheuser**

Sound: **Jason Milligan**

Line Producer: **Connie Littlefield**

Composer: **Michelle Osis**

Produced by **White Pine Pictures** and **Ventana-Film** in association with **Super Channel, ZDF/ARTE, YLE**, with the participation of **Ontario Creates, Telefilm Canada, the Rogers Group of Funds through the Theatrical Documentary Program**, with the assistance of **The Park Foundation** and the **Government of Canada**

International Sales Agent **Films Transit**

## WEBSITES

White Pine Pictures - [www.whitepinepictures.com](http://www.whitepinepictures.com)

Trailer – <https://vimeo.com/292721963>

## ABOUT WHITE PINE PICTURES

White Pine Pictures is an independent, Canadian film and television production company based in Toronto. For 37 years White Pine Pictures has engaged audiences worldwide with compelling, revealing stories in documentary and dramatic form. Under the leadership of Peter Raymont, our film, television, and interactive productions have earned over 42 international awards, including Genies, Geminis, several Gold and Silver Hugos and The Sesterce d'Argent. We have become trusted and regular suppliers of documentary programs to all Canadian broadcasters, and to the BBC, Channel 4 (UK), PBS and Nat Geo, France 2, ZDF-ARTE, SVT, ABC and SBS (Australia) among many others.

White Pine's breakout documentary *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* was honoured with the Audience Award for World Cinema Documentaries at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and the 2007 Emmy for Best Documentary. This influential feature film had a profound impact on audiences around the world. Other White Pine documentary features include the Oscar-shortlisted *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* (2008) and *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* (2010). As with many of our films *Guantanamo's Child: Omar Khadr* (2015), premiered at The Toronto International Film Festival, and was honoured with three Canadian Screen Awards. The Emmy nominated *All Governments Lie: Truth, Deception and the Spirit of I.F. Stone* (2016) also premiered at TIFF, has been screened at many film festivals and broadcast worldwide.

In 2007, White Pine Pictures extended its documentary pedigree into the world of drama, producing three seasons of *The Border*, an award-winner for CBC Television, now seen in over 30 countries and versioned into 20 languages.

Our most recent TV series *Cracked* is an award-winning one hour crime/medical drama, about a seasoned police officer at the helm of the Psych Crimes and Crisis Unit, who is himself effected by post-traumatic stress disorder. *Cracked* aired for two seasons across Canada and has been sold to France, Germany, and USA among others.

White Pine's experienced management team of Peter Raymont, Steve Ord and Andrew Munger are committed to engaging audiences across genres and platforms with stories that matter. We take pride in working with the best creative talent and respected international partners who embrace the depth of content and high production values that defines us.

More about White Pine Pictures can be found on the company's website at [www.whitepinepictures.com](http://www.whitepinepictures.com)