



Blackout: How the Electric Industry Exploits America

Gordon L. Weil

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In the midst of the sweltering summer of August 2003, the lights went out across northeast America. From Canada to Philadelphia, houses were plunged into darkness, elevators stalled, subway cars ceased to run, air-conditioners shuddered into silence, and the candle-lit 1890s streets of Brooklyn became a reality once more. Astonishingly, no company or individual has ever been held accountable for what cost affected regions millions of dollars in lost revenue and compensation. The electricity companies involved introduced no new rules, nor a single firing — nothing. As Gordon Weil explores in *Blackout*, this was the culmination of a long history of exploitation by the electric industry of its customers, coupled with the seeming indifference and incompetence of the regulators who were supposed to protect them. Weil describes the founding of the original electric monopoly by Edison and his secretary, Insull, and reveals how and why Roosevelt's efforts to control the company's excesses failed. Weil continues with the willful failure of the industry to integrate itself into the competitive marketplace; a failure in which the customer remains the biggest loser. Weil concludes that unless the government and the regulators undertake radical legislation, "lights out" remains a distinct possibility for us all.

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