

STEALING AMERICA: VOTE BY VOTE

Rated:NR

Stealing America: Vote by Vote does for American democracy what *An Inconvenient Truth* did for global warming. Was the last presidential election a complete travesty? Thousands of voters reported machine breakdowns and inaccurate totals in 42 states in the 2004 presidential elections, according to this riveting and carefully reasoned documentary. Even more disturbing is the disparity between the vote count recorded by electronic machines and the count provided by exit polls. The voting machines, for instance, had George Bush winning by a percentage of 51% to 48%. The exit polls indicated that John Kerry had won by a count of 51% to 48%. In addition, there is evidence that "over 90%" of vote switches made by the machines were to Bush's advantage.

The technology that promised to make elections more accurate actually offered opportunities for voting manipulation that are thoroughly explored in this meticulous indictment. A variety of poll workers, attorneys and monitors testify to vote-switching—but this phenomenon was ignored by the American media. Serious irregularities occurred in 13 states, including Florida, but newspaper, radio and television commentators ignored it.

Stealing America: Vote By Vote is careful not to demonize the Republicans or George W. Bush. Indeed, John Kerry is faulted for conceding Ohio before all of the votes were counted in that volatile state.

Among the people interviewed who support the thesis of this film are Bob Hagan, a former Ohio state senator and witness to onscreen vote-switching; Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., environmental lawyer and activist; and Paul Craig Roberts, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under President Ronald Reagan.

Clearly demonstrated is the technique for altering voting machine software. The Diebold voting machines—employed throughout the 2004 election and in use today—can be reprogrammed in under a minute using small memory cards that leave no evidence of who has altered the machine's ability to accept votes for a particular candidate. In an ominous quote, Walden O'Dell, the CEO of Diebold, declares that he is determined to ensure a Republican victory.

Other concerns are examined one at a time. The metaphor of scattered marbles—problem after problem, small in themselves but devastating in the totality of their destructive power—is aptly used to describe the current threats to the American electorate. At the film's conclusion, we are exhorted to "take our country back."

The issue is enough to make adults weep, but is it enough to spur action? "The right to vote...is the primary right by which other rights are protected," said Thomas Paine, an observation we ignore to our peril.

Critic: Bruce Feld