

SAN FRANCISCO BAY

GUARDIAN

June 16 - June 22, 2004 • Vol. 38, No. 38

Thirst

By Dennis Harvey

Local documentarians Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman's latest presents another smart bottom-to-top take on complexly related racial, economic, legislative, and individual issues. The crux here: can water access remain "part of the global commons" everyone should have free access to, or is it doomed to become an economic commodity bought and sold like any other? The prognosis is not encouraging.

As in so many other areas of society, privatization is creeping into the hitherto strictly government-regulated terrain of water processing, delivery, and infrastructure. But is it wise to surrender control over so essential a resource to private, profit-driven entities? How can we be sure they have (and will maintain) our best interests in mind? The filmmakers travel to Bolivia and India, where such recent shifts have caused bitter strife. Stockton proves a Stateside focal point for similar argument when the mayor and city council try – and eventually succeed in – replacing a reputedly excellent local water department with German-led company Thames.

This important and engrossing film provides a spur to activism that no one should ignore, unless they're rich enough in obliviousness to propose, "Let them drink sake." Little Roxie.