

Monterey Should Not Privatize its Water System

The people and political leaders of Monterey are facing a very serious decision right now over whether or not to turn their public water system over to a private, for profit water company called American Water. It is a decision that more and more American towns and cities and political jurisdictions all over the world are facing.

It is quite tempting to turn over expensive water systems to public, for profit companies and allow political jurisdictions to wash their hands and their budgets of the costs of the most important ingredient to life on this planet that there is.

All over the world private companies are acquiring water resources, more and more holding the life of the world's people to a profit motive far removed from democratic decisions or human rights concerns.

Monterey should immediately decline American Water's request to acquire the water system.

As this paper's editorial has pointed out, privatizing water will raise its cost to the people and businesses of Monterey. That in itself should be enough to convince political leadership to say no to American Water. Once privatized the benefits of the water system will accrue to American Water's shareholders and management, not to the people and businesses of Monterey.

Secondly, once the water system is in American Water's hands they will have a stranglehold on the city. They will argue for rate increases and service charges that the city will be ill-prepared to resist without hiring expensive outside legal council.

Third, after the air we breathe water is the most important component of life. After the meltdown of Wall St two years ago and the subsequent loss of \$2 trillion of American wealth and the greatest economic recession in 70 years and the near ruination of an entire ecological and economic system by British Petroleum in the Gulf of Mexico, do any of us really want to turn over our most precious commodity to the tender mercies of profit mad private corporations?

The entire world is facing a very serious crisis of water supply. People from the Sudan in Africa to India to China are dying for the lack of clean drinking water. All the while, ruthless corporations are buying up water supplies and resources to make profits off the suffering and death of people all over our planet. Some scientists say that water scarcity and ownership will be our next oil crisis where private profits trump the public good and the public's health.

Given this global crisis, do the people of Monterey really want to turn over their most precious resource to a company which demonstrates its greed every day?

American Water has an atrocious record of public malfeasance with environmental crises in Kentucky and other states and now with its refusal to negotiate in good faith with its own employees. Our union and six others have been trying to negotiate a reasonable contract without cuts in health care for over six months. American Water has refused to bargain in good faith. What is the lesson Monterey can learn from our experience? American Water cares only about its profits and management pay, nothing for the public good.

Water is the most precious component to human life. Its distribution should not be left to the tender mercies of a market system that cares only for profit and management payoffs. Monterey should reject American Water's bid to take over Monterey's most precious asset.

Michael Langford