THIRSTING FOR JUSTICE

“DEFENDING THE GLOBAL WATER COMMONS”

Water wars:
Exploring the 20th-century neo-liberal context and the struggle against water privitisation.

Voices of resistance:
From North and South, Latin America and Ireland.

Global challenges
Water and Gender. Water and Youth. Water and Debt. Water and Culture. Water and Environment...

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LASC gratefully acknowledges funding from Irish Aid & TRÓCAIRE
In Ireland too it is a burning issue. In Latin America, the ownership of water is a matter of vital importance for anyone concerned with the planet and with human dignity. To restrict access to water only to those who can pay reproduces the ultimate commodification, and has aroused fierce public resistance. In Ireland too it is a burning issue. In Northern Ireland the ‘We Won’t Pay’ campaign is attracting cross-community support, fighting the London government’s plan to privatise Northern Irish water. Privatisation of public water was defeated in the Republic in the mid-1990’s, but is believed to be on the cards, or at least the subject of changes for commercial users (see within).

L.A.W. 2007 concentrates on the lessons that we have in Ireland can learn from the Latin American struggle for access to water. How did some of our battles and victories in Latin America manage to regain control of their water services in the face of neoliberalism? How did they manage to throw some of the most powerful water corporations in the world out of their cities? Those are success stories — or are they? We look forward to hearing what the situations in Bolivia after the Water War, and after president Evo Morales set up the Water Ministry, the first of its kind. And what the Water Revolution (organised by popular demand) has really meant for the most marginalised sectors of society in Uruguay. Or how the people of San Cristóbal de Las Casas are facing after the mass mobilisation that put a stop to water privatisation in their community.

We have assembled here a collection of articles to explain why we are working on water privatisation, to give a snapshot of the global water justice movement as it stands in early 2007, and to give detailed background information on the various struggles around water which our invited speakers will tell us. The speakers we have invited will participate in workshops, conferences and other events all around the island of Ireland. They have all taken a role to speak as leaders of their respective movements, and are no less than heroes of the 500-year struggle of Latin Americans to resist oppression and exploitation. You can meet them in small development education workshops during the Week, or meet them in small development education workshops during the Week, or see them in person at our annual festival of development and cultural events, co-ordinated by LASC Coordinator.

In the course of our research and communications over the past year, it became clear that the greatest potential for offering our solidarity to grassroots struggles for justice in Latin America, as well as for learning from Latin America how best to fight injustice at home, lay in water. As an article in this programme states, ‘the global water justice movement is growing as it stands in early 2007, and to give detailed background information on the various struggles around water which our invited speakers will tell us.

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Globally, water wars have only been a feature of the past decade. In this article we examine the 20th-century context of a 21st-century phenomenon.

The 21st century's first great victory against corporate power was won high in the South American Andes, when the citizens of Cochabamba, Bolivia successfully resisted the privatisation of their drinking water services. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary working people battled police in the streets in early 2000, in what became known as the first Water War.

Why would a democratically elected government hand over public property, in the face of enormous public opposition, to a wasteful, predatory and incompetent private sector? Why would it beat, imprison and even kill its own citizens for expressing this opposition?

The story stretches back to the mid-twentieth century when the dominant economic theory in those countries sometimes known as 'the West' was based on Keynesian economics, with its emphasis on taxation and redistribution of wealth from rich to poor, albeit within a capitalist framework. Unions made gains in the post World War Two decades in terms of salary and worker protections, enough to threaten established financial interests.

The doctrine of 'neoliberalism' – whose name harks back to the mid-nineteenth-century laissez-faire economics which led, amongst other things, to economic stagnation and famine in both Latin America and Ireland – was resurrected. It had been developed in the 1930's but was seen as unworkably right-wing in the post-fascism era.

Neoliberal policy was researched, and pushed at government level, in the USA and Europe by conservative think-tanks and powerful lobby groups, financed to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars by enormously wealthy individuals and groups, and given its first outing on Sept. 11th, 1973, in Chile. That was the date Augusto Pinochet, backed by US companies, the CIA and Henry Kissinger, overthrew the leftist government of Salvador Allende in a bloody coup. The Chicago Boys, a group of neoliberal economists from the University of Chicago, rushed to Chile to advise the new military government. Nationalisations were reversed, public assets were sold off, and natural resources and social security were privatised. Foreign firms were courted, indulged and guaranteed the right to repatriate profits. (Incidentally thirty years later the same neoliberalism would be brought to Iraq, also by the gun, using the other September 11th in 2001 as a pretext.)

In the decades since, international aid donors – most importantly the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the development aid programmes of some rich countries – have insisted upon poor countries adopting 'sound' economic policies, meaning of course neoliberal ones, as a condition of vital loans and aid. This is fortunately not true of the Republic of Ireland's official aid programme, Irish Aid, which has been singled out for praise in this regard.

Thanks to the Debt Crisis – generated in no small part by World Bank policy in the 1970’s – governments in the Global South have had no choice but to implement policy which is against the interests of the majority of their citizens.

'Free' trade agreements, a pillar of neoliberalism, have been forced upon them, ensuring a flow of resources from the poor to the rich at the minimum cost, as we saw in Latin America Week (L.A.W.) 2003 on the Free trade Area of the Americas.

The promise of neoliberalism is that, while there may be some economic pain in the short term – particularly for the poor, who for example may have to put up with the death of their children if they cannot afford to pay water charges – in the long term the rising tide of economic growth will ‘lift all boats’.

Why would a democratically elected government hand over public property, in the face of enormous public opposition, to a wasteful, predatory and incompetent private sector?
Despite the many disasters neoliberal policy has visibly created, it has been relentlessly promoted by those who identify with power, and has risen to virtually unchallenged dominance in politics and economics worldwide.

Even this scenario, far from desirable, has not been borne out by experience. In most regions of the world, economic growth and improvements in health and literacy have slowed to a snail’s pace since the Reagan/Thatcher years. Inequalities, globally and locally, have spiralled upwards in the neoliberal decades, most of all within those countries which have applied neoliberal policies with the greatest enthusiasm. While it has brought booms to countries such as Ireland, naturally welcome to those who benefit, booms bring their own problems and leave economies vulnerable to a ‘bust’ when capital moves on.

Some particularly arrant examples of neoliberalism’s failures (or successes, viewed from the viewpoint of the super-rich) are being played out at the moment in Ireland. The West Link toll bridge, built for €38 million, is being bought back by the Government for €600 million, after having raised €400 million for its owners in tolls. The British health insurer BUPA pulled out of the lucrative Irish market when it was no longer allowed freely to cherry-pick younger, healthier clients. It may take up to €100 million in accumulated profit out of this country’s economy with it. (See L.A.W. 2004, ‘The Commodification of Health’, on www.lasc.ie)

The controversial deal by corrupt former minister Ray Burke to exploit the Corrib gas field means the Shell-led consortium will own all the gas extracted from it, and can sell it to Bord Gáis at full market rates. The Irish state will receive no royalties and no share of the gas. (See L.A.W. 2005 on the ownership of natural resources)

Despite the many disasters neoliberal policy has visibly created, it has been relentlessly promoted by those who identify with power, and has risen to virtually unchallenged dominance in politics and economics worldwide. It is usually presented as inevitable, a force like gravity. But it is important to understand that this vast experiment we are all being forced to live under has been created by people with a purpose.

Once you grasp this, you can also understand that what some people have created, other people can change. Latin Americans have been at the forefront of this change and we hope that in this year’s Latin America Week we will learn more about how we can support, and learn from, them.

How neoliberalism causes water wars will be examined more specifically in the next article, ‘Enclosing the Water Commons.’ A longer version of this article can be found on www.lasc.ie

Water is the only drink for a wise man. Henry David Thoreau
Nobody can live more than a few days without fresh water. Only 2.5% of the water on this earth is fresh, and over two-thirds of this is locked in the polar ice caps or glaciers. About 20% of the world’s population now lives in ‘water-stressed’ regions, where fresh water is being depleted faster than it can be replaced. Water is becoming a scarce resource.

Water is of huge symbolic significance in every human culture. Our bodies are 70% water. Neoliberalism’s attempt to refashion our relationship with this water has aroused huge resistance, has sparked an instinctive welling-up of the human spirit against injustice and for dignity. Nonetheless, water costs money to treat and distribute, especially in rural areas. Someone must pay.

Advocates of privatisation argue that governments, particularly in the global South, often do not have the resources to invest in water systems or to maintain and operate them adequately. As a result, many people are not connected to a pipe network, and they can pay 10 times more for the same amount of water. Therefore, the argument runs, money to expand the network should be raised from the private sector. The promise of ‘cost-recovery’ from paying consumers will make it attractive for companies to invest, thus spreading the network and giving more people access to clean water. Competition and private-sector efficiency will keep customer costs to an acceptable level.

Cheered on by this type of rhetoric – and by the water multinationals – governments rushed to privatise public water utilities through the 1990’s. In some cases, freshwater lakes were privatised, and it became illegal for citizens to drink from them. In Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2000 it was even illegal to trap rainwater without permission from the water company. The rain had been privatised. But the glowing future envisaged in the neoliberal theory failed to materialise. Mass protests broke out, provoked by water rate increases of up to 500%. In some cases, cut-offs of those who could not afford to pay had resulted in disease outbreaks, while even those who did pay received a poor service often including contaminated water.

These ‘water wars’ have resulted in the cancellation of contracts in some cases. Many other contracts were terminated by governments after private water operators failed to deliver on promised investment to expand water pipe networks to poor areas. This was entirely predictable, since private companies only invest where they can make a profit, not where there is greatest need.

The argument that competition – one of neoliberalism’s sacred cows – would bring good service and reasonable prices is seldom heard now. Even if it was correct, it has seldom been tested because Suez, Vivendi/Veolia, Thames, SAUR and Anglian – the world’s largest water companies – are connected by a global web of joint ventures designed more to protect their interests than to stimulate ‘market conditions’.
The opponents of neoliberalism are starting to respond. At the World Water Forum in Mexico in 2006, an unprecedented 30,000 people marched in defence of public water as part of a global commons, rather than a commodity. There are grassroots groups of ‘water warriors’ all over the world, in varied but related struggles.

Water corporations have retrenched, toning down their rhetoric – they now tend to avoid the term ‘privatisation’, preferring instead to talk about ‘decentralisation’, ‘civil society partnership’ and ‘sustainable development’. Despite this, water privatisation is very much alive, and – despite its defeat in the Republic of Ireland in the mid 1990’s – will be tried again here long or short. It is currently being attempted in Northern Ireland.

We have assembled a collection of articles here to give a snapshot of the global water justice movement. They range from personal eye witness accounts of water struggles from participants in Latin America and Ireland to analysis of the global movement itself. The particular impacts of water injustice on women and girls, Travellers and youth are looked at, and the major relevant water corporations are examined individually.

Critics of privatisation tend to favour publicly-funded water systems, with the money being raised from an equitable tax system, or from cross-subsidisation from high-volume users – mostly industry – to low-volume users, mostly domestic and the poor.

Alternatives to water privatisation

Critics of privatisation tend to favour publicly-funded water systems, with the money being raised from an equitable tax system, or from cross-subsidisation from high-volume users – mostly industry – to low-volume users, mostly domestic and the poor, with a set amount sufficient for basic needs supplied free of charge. They call for reform of democratically accountable, public water utilities, and point out that while some public water companies are inefficient and give a poor service, a growing number are providing a good service to their users. Latin America and Ireland are rich in examples of clean, affordable water being delivered to those in need. When given sufficient support, public utilities have demonstrated themselves to be transparent, accountable and efficient.

Any veteran of Latin America Weeks past will not fail to notice that most of the issues we have covered in the past decade are tied in with water. This, too, influenced our decision to focus upon it as the natural resource of choice to begin Year Two of our current three-year strategic plan. Year Three involves action for change, and we expect that a specific campaign will grow out of this year’s Latin America Week. We hope that you can participate, and help shape our solidarity with Latin America for the years to come.

“People who are not connected to a pipe network can pay 10 times more for the same amount of water”

“Thousands have lived without love, not one without water” – W.H. Auden
ARGENTINA

Argentina has suffered for more than a decade while being ruled by the global guinea pig for water privatization experiments. However, after years of social turmoil surrounding these failed experiments (lack of investments in the maintenance, repairs and expansion of water utilities, rate hikes, cut-offs for those who could not afford the service, water contamination due to lack of appropriate treatment, on-going disputes regarding contractual incompliance) state and other major water corporations are going home.

BOLIVIA

Bolivia is one of Latin America's poorest countries, where one third of the population has no access to clean water and seven percent of the people live below the poverty line. Yet the Bolivians are determined to reclaim their rights to water and all natural resources and public land. As the country’s national water resources are being sold to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, the right to water is being sold to private companies.

CHILE

Chile has been one of the most privatization-friendly countries in Latin America, privatizing its water sector in the 1990s. However, with the new center-left president, Michelle Bachelet, elected in January 2006, there could be a shift in the non-liberal policies of privatization that have governed Chile and allowed for the distribution of its most precious resource to be controlled by corporations for private profit.

Ecuador

In October 2006, just months after the people of Bolivia threw Bechtel out of Cochabamba, this very same company signed a water privatization contract in Guayaquil, Ecuador, a city of almost 2 million inhabitants. After years of poor service, water cut-offs, flooding, and unsafe drinking water, the residents of Guayaquil are getting organized to demand their human rights — which include the right to clean and affordable water.

EL SALVADOR

El Salvador is a country in crisis. Ninety percent of the country’s natural water is contaminated, and half the population drinks untreated water. The people of El Salvador are struggling to have their most basic needs satisfied while the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank continue pushing the disastrous scenario of privatization.

HONDURAS

In August 2003, thousands of protesters demonstrated against the policies imposed by the IMF, which included water privatization policies. Eighty percent of the 4.2 million people in Honduras live in poverty, although the country has continued paying debt to the IMF and to other creditors at the rate of $32 million in 2002 and another $16.3 million in 2003.

MEXICO

The Fox administration is trying hard to push forward the water privatization agenda in Mexico. However, in a country that has had 20 years of failed non-liberal policies imposed by the national government, the IMF and the World Bank, privatization is not popular. Communities across the country are getting organized to defend their rivers, streams, aquifers and lakes.

NICARAGUA

In Nicaragua, where serious problems in the water sanitation and supply sector are already limiting the access to clean water as a public resource, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Latin-American Development Bank (IDB) are pushing a water privatization policy that will make it even more difficult for Nicaraguans of all classes, but mostly the poorest among them, to have access to clean water at affordable rates.

PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico has too often served as a guinea pig for corporate privatization policies. French water corporations such as Veolia and Suez both attempted to privatize water systems on this island. These companies eventually pulled out of Puerto Rico, being faced with outraged consumers and the government unwillingness to pay the bill.

URUGUAY

Uruguay has gained a landmark victory in the struggle to defend water as a public good and a human right. In 2005 a constitutional reform was approved via popular referendum. This reform banned any privatization of water and defined water as a human right and a public natural resource. It remains now to be seen how the government will proceed to implement this constitutional reform through its policies.
No other issue in recent memory has done more to unite Catholic and Protestant communities.

By Gary Mulcahy, Secretary, We Won’t Pay Campaign

They would clandestinely reconnect for non-payment, plumbers the Council cut off people’s water to back down. For example, when the Council cut off people’s water for non-payment, plumbers would clandestinely reconnect them.

No other issue in recent memory has happened in Britain in terms of the privatisation of a service that was seen as a basic right and determined not to allow things to go in the same direction.

Anonymous

Throughout the history of literature, the guy who poisons the well has been the worst of all villains.

IN NORTHERN IRELAND

OPPOSITION TO WATER CHARGES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

By Gregor Kerr, member Workers Solidarity Movement and former Secretary of Federation of Dublin Anti Water Charge Campaigns

The mid 1990s saw a titanic battle between Dublin communities and the local authorities over attempts by the Councils to impose a water charge. People power, a mass refusal to pay and strong community resistance were successful in forcing the Councils to back down. For example, when the Council cut off people’s water for non-payment, plumbers would clandestinely reconnect them.

When the charges were initially mooted, opposition came for two reasons. Firstly, ordinary workers were fed up with the inequities in the taxation system. While big business and the wealthy availed of tax breaks and evaded paying their share of the tax bill, it was seen that yet again working class people were being asked to foot the bill.

Secondly, and just as importantly, the introduction of a charge was seen as the stalking horse by which privatisation of the service would be introduced.

The aim of the We Won’t Pay Campaign is to organise people in the communities to stand together in solidarity and refuse to pay the charges. Over 80,000 people have so far signed the campaign’s non-payment pledge, but this is the mere tip of the iceberg.

The We Won’t Pay Campaign is confident we can force the British Government or Northern Ireland Assembly to scrap water charges. If you are interested in joining the campaign then contact us at 028 90 311778 or visit our website at www.wewontpaycampaign.com

IN IRELAND

WATER STRUGGLES

BEATING THE WATER CHARGES IN DUBLIN

By Gregor Kerr, member Workers Solidarity Movement and former Secretary of Federation of Dublin Anti Water Charge Campaigns

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The introduction of water charges will mean increases in general taxation. The combined inroads into revenue to NIWL so it can proceed with full-scale privatisation.

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The We Won’t Pay Campaign is confident we can force the British Government or Northern Ireland Assembly to scrap water charges. If you are interested in joining the campaign then contact us at 028 90 311778 or visit our website at www.wewontpaycampaign.com

No other issue in recent memory has done more to unite Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland than the British Government’s plans to introduce water charges.

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Water privatization in Sligo?

The introduction of water metering and charging saw for the first time in Sligo a private company, in this case the multi-national water company Veolia (see Veolia box in “Water Wars – Why?” article) placed between the citizen and a fresh clean water supply. So far, the vast majority of citizens receive their water through a publicly owned and managed system. While it appears that Veolia’s involvement in water supply in Sligo at present is confined to meter reading and billing, members of Community-Alliance Sligo are worried that this role will grow over time and will lead to full privatization of water in the future.

There is also discontent in the small businesses sector in Sligo. The County Council recently increased the cost of water services to €5.68 per 1,000 gallons. Water charges in Sligo have increased by 162% between 2002 and 2006. Padraig O’Grady, regional director, IBEC North West, fears that the cost of these charges and the expense of the water metering process for businesses in Sligo are putting jobs at risk. He pointed out that many companies in Sligo are indigenous family owned businesses employing less than twenty people and as such are unable to absorb further cost increases. For further information, please see:


Water protest in Limerick

The residents of Pallaskenry and Kildimo, West Limerick, are protesting against the planned replacement of the community water source, which started in June 2006. The Limerick County Council wants to replace the present water supply, which is currently sourced from a local lake named Bleach Lough, with the water from the River Deel, which locals say is adversely polluted.

The long running dispute over the Pallaskenry and Kildimo water supply is due to move to Brussels at the end of February. The Petitions Committee of the European Parliament has invited representatives from the group that wants to retain the supply from Bleach Lough, to make their case before the Committee. This comes after written submissions were accepted last summer.

For more information please see:

http://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.net/papers/categories.php?op=newindex&catid=16

Water is a moving, wandering thing, and must of necessity continue to be common by the law of nature. — William Blackstone
AMANZI

USE OF WATER

Without water we would die within three days.
Every 8 seconds a child dies from contaminated water.
City dwellers in the Majority World may pay up to 50 times as much for water as city dwellers in Europe and America.
25 million people die each year from contaminated water. That’s equivalent to the entire population of Canada.

40% of the increase in global water use expected by 2020 (United Nations Environment Programme, GEO-Global Environment Outlook 3, Past, Present and Future Perspectives).
The average amount of water used by 60,000 Thai villagers per day: 6,500 cubic meters. The average amount of water used by one golf course in Thailand per day: 6,500 cubic meters.
The degree of consumption of this scarce resource mirrors the gross inequalities of today’s world:
• An Australian uses on average 1,000 litres a day
• A USA citizen uses 300–400 litres
• A European uses 100–200 litres
• A Sub-Saharan African 10–20 litres

As the world’s population increased three-fold in the 20th century, water consumption increased seven-fold due to increased need for industry and commercialised agriculture.

It is estimated that only 55% of the water that is available is used; 45% is wasted through evaporation during irrigation, leakages, and inefficient distribution.

Twice as much water was used worldwide in 2000 as in 1960.
60% of the world’s rivers have been dammed.

BOTTLED WATER

Average consumption of bottled water per person per year 2002 or latest available:
Asia: 7 litres
East Europe: 20 litres
West Europe: 101 litres
USA: 75 litres

Sales of bottled water in the USA leapt by 11% in one year between 2000 and 2001.
The World Bank estimates the global trade in water to be US$1,000 trillion in 2001.

Americans empty 2.5 million plastic water bottles an hour. Each one takes 500 years to decompose.
12% of all cases of food poisoning in Britain are caused by bottled water.

ACCESS TO WATER

One billion. The number of people worldwide who do not have any water within a 15 minute walk of their home.
1.4 billion. The estimated number of people worldwide who lack access to clean drinking water.
2.4 billion. The estimated number of people who lack access to sanitation. Most are in Africa and Asia.
$50 billion. The projected cost per year of bringing universal access to water by 2015 to those living in poverty.
****Access to water per % of world population****

Competition water uses:

- **Industrial Use**: 22%
- **Domestic Use**: 8%
- **Agricultural Use**: 70%

As the world's population grows from 6 to 8 billion over the next 20 years, the average amount of water available to each person will decline by one-third.

SALES OF GROUPS AND WATER DIVISIONS, 2001

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H2O, Guardian special supplement, August 2003

Saturation from: http://www.psiru.org/reports/2002-08-W-MNCs.doc

You could not step twice into the same rivers; for other waters are ever flowing on to you. Heraclitus of Ephesus
One of the great paradoxes of our age is that, in a world of such technical advances and superabundance, more and more of humanity is facing the most basic shortage of all—water. This growing shortage of water has occurred not so much because of any absolute shortage but more because of the ways in which people in the richer parts of the world consume it. Added to this is a major problem of the pollution of water supplies: in developing countries 90 per cent of used domestic water and 70 per cent of industrial waste water are recycled back into the water supply without treatment. This shortage is a reflection of the scandalous inequalities that characterise today’s world. This is illustrated in the figures for who uses most water: an Australian uses on average 1,000 litres a day, a North American uses 300-400 litres, a European 100-200 litres and a Sub-Saharan African 10-20 litres.

What, then, are the solutions? Two dominant approaches characterise today’s agenda. The first is privatisation as countries sell their water distribution systems to private companies. This may bring badly needed investment into these systems but almost always does so at the cost to the poor who cannot afford to pay the higher prices these companies charge. Furthermore, treating water as a marketable commodity offends many people’s deeply held values as water is widely seen as a common resource for all. A second approach, often in opposition to privatisation, treats water as a human right. While this is an advance, it faces a major problem. This is that it avoids the challenge of ensuring that it is available to people—simply defining it as a right may in fact lead people to use the courts as a way of trying to force governments to supply them with water. This route is costly and not at all assured of success. Unfortunately, these approaches have tended to distract attention from the sustained investment that is required throughout the world to develop efficient systems of water distribution, eliminating wastage and avoiding pollution. But it would also require a change in consumption patterns, particularly in the most developed parts of the world where most water is used. Addressing these challenges is going to loom ever larger on the global agenda.
**VOICES FROM BOLIVIA**

**Water Privatization in Bolivia and the Struggle of the People.**
By Marco LLanos

In Bolivia, important milestones have been reached in the struggle for the right to water. The first was reached in the city of Cochabamba in the year 2000. The second struggle began to be organized in mid-2004 in the city of El Alto. The movement called the "Development of Local Power," a project of the UNITAS (Bolivian Health Workers Trade Unions’ Association) network. My work consists of supporting and helping them access information so that they can demand their rights.

On September 2004, the tariff and services of the private company Aguas del Illimani which supplied El Alto were analyzed.

This analysis was carried out jointly with some of the members of the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations (FENAUDE) 2004-2006 and local leaders and residents of the 4th District. The company was made up mostly of the Suez trans-national. One of the problems was to obtain the "Concession Contract." Not even the Agency for the Supervision of Basic Sanitation, which is the fiscal arm of the State, was willing to give us this information.

Protests were organized and FEJUVE issued an ultimatum to the government demanding the reviews of the contract with Aguas del Illimani. The deadline was December 26th 2004.

The voice of a Cochabamba Water Warrior

By Randara

The water war is the most important experience that might have happened to our community. We fought against a corrupt government, against a transnational corporation and above all, against imperium.

We defended what is ours: the water company SEMAPA, which is of the people and for the people and it is under the control of the workers.

During the months of February and April 2000, we clashed with the police and the military in order to defend our water. There were two digits and hundreds wounded. An ambulance, when the policemen grabbed me, they started hitting me. As they saw that I was laughing hilarity, they hit me harder.

They would have wanted only one thing: for me to beg 'don't hit me anymore!' Or to me to ask them for forgiveness. I did not do it though, because of my dignity and because I feel proud to be a water warrior, because of the lives dedicated to the struggle to defend our water, and because of the struggles carried out by the government and by the transnational Bechtel.

My mouth and eyebrows started bleeding and I said to them 'You might take away my life and my freedom but you will never - ever - take away the soul of my revolutionary heart!' They stopped hitting me and they cleaned my face.

The water war has been an historical moment for the world at large because for the first time ever in Cochabamba, in Bolivia and in the whole world has a transnational corporation been thrown out of a community.

The blood keeps running but the people keep fighting. Only people can save the people. The struggle has just started though, because the next world war will not be over oil or gold, but over water.

The government prolonged the negotiations and launched a media campaign against local leaders. We recorded and filmed the government's proposals.

The analysis was finalized and it concluded that the contract contained a number of irregularities as well as clauses which were not fulfilled. In March, people of El Alto mobilized in order to stop Aguas del Illimani.

A photographer, Juan Carlos Cândida, joined our group. Juan Carlos Cândida, Carlos Revilla and myself, closely followed the mobilizations. In this context we decided to publish Protests Alight (El Alto Prolet), a bulletin that was distributed at the protests and which contained the demands of the people and data on the irregularities of Aguas del Illimani.

**Water and solidarity: reflections on a community’s struggle for water.**

By Mauricio de Barra

My first visit to Barrio Solidaridad was made in Spring 2000. From Bolivia’s capital, La Paz, the highway climbs the steep hillsides to the congested hub of Paz, the highway climbs the steep hillsides to the congested hub of El Alto. This indigenous city is perched at 4,500m and is home to over 800,000 people living on US$1 per day.

Barrio Solidaridad is a small community of some 30 families, who since their collective occupation of the land in 2000, have developed El Alto’s youngest community - Barrio Solidaridad or Solidarity Quarter.

Curiously, this Barrio is overlooked by a private water treatment plant - the 2000 water war which pitied mobilized citizens against the multinational water company, Aguas del Illimani and its majority stakeholder Suez. The eventual name of this war was celebrated in January 2007 with the promise of a referendum to public control of El Alto’s Water Ministry. Prior to the popular protests, residents were charged US$70 for a water connection - the equivalent of nine months salary of the average household.

During my frequent visits to Barrio Solidaridad, over a two-year period, I witnessed families consume water from shallow trenches of turgid water and untreated water leaking from the plant - all within view of Aguas del Illimani’s security and management personnel. El Alto’s government criticized the silent khiểnment of a family burying their child, whose death was caused by contaminated water.

In Spring 2000, I observed the compelling results of a private donation from Canadian water activist, Maude Barlow to Barrio Solidaridad a gesture whole Aguas del Illimani attempted to claim responsibility for in the local press. With this financial support, the entire community purchased a solar water pump and assembled their simple, makeshift homes. It’s now Spring 2007 and families in Barrio Solidaridad wait to have water running through the earth’s new veins and quench their long thirst.

**Water Rising**, a documentary film work in progress about Bolivia’s water struggles.

A short clip by Mauricio de Barra and Aisling Crudden (2005) will be screened during LAW.

(several photos of Water protests in Bolivia. Photos by Marco Llanos)
to truly address the challenges of water in this century, it must remain a commons; the rights of people, the land and all other species, shall not be usurped by market ideologues and profiteers.

Corporations and capitalisms’ exploitation of the earth is brought into bright focus. Following Nestlé’s diversion of local groundwater for its booming bottled water business, my own politics became that much more personal. The battles are local, stakes are high, and every day there seems to be a new front. Without a doubt, I’ve taken courage from the water warriors of Latin America in their varied, but related struggles. We all know the story of Cochabamba, Bolivia, and the fearless resistance they gave Bechtel when suddenly water rates rose by 200% following privatization of the water system in early 2000. Declaring “We want our dammit!” those women, men and small children who took to the streets for water captivated so many of us, showing us how it must be done with guts. Every water struggle since that prophetically in 2001 has been in some way, an homage to those tide-turning defenders of water.

Now there are grassroots groups throughout Latin America, united by the Red-Vida Network. In the U.S. and Canada, The Water Allies are the sister network. We all believe that the water commons must be a priority. For without a doubt, I’ve taken courage from the water which sustains us. For this reason, some of the best water work is being done before we can even agree that there is a crisis. Much work remains to be done before we can truly agree that citizens of the north and south understand what is at stake when neoliberalism refashions our relationship to the water which sustains us. For this reason, some of the best water work is not about protest or movement building, as much as the continued, appropriate use of the resource for community building and self-help. This principle is exemplified by people who persist in practicing traditional methods of water management, whether by harvesting rainwater in arid regions of Honduras, or maintaining the communal irrigation ditches—acequias—in northern New Mexico, thus supporting subsistence farming appropriate to the landscape. Being a young movement, it has been critical to share capacity, ideas, strategies and victories. In the global north we are learning from our compañeros to the south that we must be bold, tireless, and undeterred by the power structures that stand in our way. The water industry is a multi-billion dollar business and we are up against an incredible PR machine, political connections, and the preponderance of many national governments to defer to the private sector to fix failed policy, aged infrastructure, and the vexing social problems that come with both. Much work remains to be done before we can truly agree that citizens of the north and south understand what is at stake when neoliberalism refashions our relationship to the water which sustains us. For this reason, some of the best water work is not about protest or movement building, as much as the continued, appropriate use of the resource for community building and self-help. This principle is exemplified by people who persist in practicing traditional methods of water management, whether by harvesting rainwater in arid regions of Honduras, or maintaining the communal irrigation ditches—acequias—in northern New Mexico, thus supporting subsistence farming appropriate to the landscape. Being a young movement, it has been critical to share capacity, ideas, strategies and victories. In the global north we are learning from our compañeros to the south that we must be bold, tireless, and undeterred by the power structures that stand in our way. 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Much work remains to be done before we can truly agree that citizens of the north and south understand what is at stake when neoliberalism refashions our relationship to the water which sustains us.
The Latin American Water Tribunal (LATW) is an international and autonomous body, set up to evaluate cases of environmental damage to water resources. The water tribunal was first established in the Central American region in 1996 and expanded to cover whole Latin America in 2004. Supported by European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), it was created to confront the “crisis of legality and the diminished effectiveness of laws on issues related to water resources,” according to Javier Bogantes, director of the non-governmental Latin American Water Tribunal based in Costa Rica. Its initiative aims to facilitate the creation of control mechanisms to defend the continent’s water resources. It is an official tribunal and its resolutions are not legally binding, but they act as guidelines for the resolution of water-related conflicts in the region.

A panel of eight legal and water experts from Brazil, Cuba, France, Guatemala and Mexico is putting water polluting governments and private companies from 10 Latin American countries on trial. Crimes they are accused of are: polluting rivers and lakes, building harmful dams, providing overpriced and bad water management systems, etc. Their verdicts might have moral force only, but are intended to raise awareness of the unjust water management by governments and transnational companies.

The idea of a water tribunal is not a recent one. The first water tribunal goes back to the 1980s, when a hearing was held in the Dutch city of Rotterdam to alleviate the damage caused by pollution in the Rhine river basin. Since 1998, the Water Tribunal has investigated 30 cases and it is currently working on 17 water “lawsuits” in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru. The Latin American Water Tribunal stands for vigilance, coordination and agreement for the protection of the water resources in Latin America.

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“A MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL”

In September 2000, 191 United Nations member countries signed a set of goals to bring sustainable development and the elimination of poverty to the top of the international community’s agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are based on agreements and resolutions reached in world conferences organised by the United Nations in the 1990s and they are commonly accepted as a community’s agenda. The 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are based on agreements and resolutions reached in world conferences organised by the United Nations in the 1990s and they are commonly accepted as a community’s agenda.

The MDGs agree to halve the proportion of people living on less than 1 dollar a day by 2015, to provide universal primary education, to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment, to reduce child mortality, to combat disease such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, to ensure environmental sustainability, and to develop a global partnership for development. These goals set benchmarks for measuring results, providing a framework for measuring “development” progress.

In 2000, 83 countries will miss the goal altogether. If this was going on in a small town in the UK or anywhere else in the developed world, the international community would be horrified and they’d be doing something about it. The Irish government declared ‘environment’ as one of four cross-cutting issues which are mainstreamed throughout Ireland’s development plans.

The Millennium Report under: http://www.dochas.ie/resources01_graph.htm

The world leaders solemnly declared they would take action to change these unacceptable living conditions. But their commitments to the millennium targets lose any credibility when we think of the fake progress made. According to Dóchas, “at current rates of progress, 1 billion people will still have no access to clean water and 2.45 billion will miss the goal altogether” by 2015. To get this figure back on track and advance the MDGs fulfilling water is necessary to have a one third increase in efforts.

In most world regions the international target to provide ‘sustainable access to safe drinking water’ is far off track. “A child dies every 15 seconds from water-related diseases. Their deaths are very easily prevented. If this was going on in a small town in the UK or anywhere else in the developed world, the international community would be horrified and they’d be doing something about it.” said Stephen Finan, Water Aid’s Director of Policy, Research and Education. Was the agreement just lip service?

“WATER POLLUTORS ON TRIAL”

A water tribunal was first established in the Dutch city of Rotterdam to alleviate the damage caused by pollution in the Rhine river basin. Since 1998, the Water Tribunal has investigated 30 cases and it is currently working on 17 water cases in Latin America. Since 1998, the Water Tribunal has investigated 30 cases and it is currently working on 17 water “lawsuits” in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.

The Latin American Water Tribunal aims to facilitate the creation of control mechanisms to defend the continent’s water resources. It is an official tribunal and its resolutions are not legally binding, but they act as guidelines for the resolution of water-related conflicts in the region. The initiative aims to facilitate the creation of control mechanisms to defend the continent’s water resources. It is an official tribunal and its resolutions are not legally binding, but they act as guidelines for the resolution of water-related conflicts in the region.

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LACK OF ACCESS TO WATER IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: IRELAND AND MEXICO
SELLING THE WATER COMMONS FROM RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES – A MEXICAN REALITY
By Ramor Ryan

10 years ago the barrio where I live was a swamp on the outskirts of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, populated by a herd of skinny cows. Migrants and refugees from the countryside arrived en masse – like any rapidly urbanizing centre in the Developing World – and now it’s a teeming barrio of cement, home to thousands of mostly indigenous families.

Prosperity has come to some: a few cars in the street, some fancy houses, and progress to all in the form of electricity, TV cable and internet. But nevertheless, despite this small prosperity there is one vital element consistently lacking in the peoples’ lives: water. Sometimes it comes for an hour a day; sometimes it doesn’t come all week.

Why is there no water? The tropical state of Chiapas is known as Mexico’s water bank, with the greatest mean average rainfall annually. Its huge dammed rivers export hydroelectric power to other states.

“The water crisis is a result of the way it is consumed,” explains local water activist Cacho, part of the strong barrio anti-privatisation movement. “The problem is the excessive consumption of water and the unequal access among the different sectors of the population. There is no water rationing or shortage for the business and tourist centre of town.”

Currently, the local municipal government controls the water supply. “And the local water authorities are running down the service in the barrios in order to open the way for privatisation,” explains Cacho.

“Meanwhile they are selling off concessions to private interests to exploit the water.”

In the ultimate irony, Coca Cola “won” a concession to build a factory on top of San Cristobal’s aquifer. Exploiting the water resources at a monthly rate of 3.5 million litres, Coca Cola pays the municipality a measly $500 annually.

(Incidentally, the director of the National Water Commission, Señor Jactes, was ex-director of Coca Cola.)

And its becomes clear from the abundant litter strewn around this poor barrio – predominantly plastic soda and water bottles – that the water is directly being taken from the aquifer, bottled, and sold to the people at a profit for Coca Cola.

At base, the struggle over the water is a clash of two visions: those who see it as an economic good to be sold on the market to the highest bidder, and those who view it as part of the common good, to be distributed equally amongst the people who use it.

The campaign against privatisation in Chiapas is gaining ground, led by the example of the Zapatistas and other indigenous communities to hold the water resources as part of the community patrimony. “In the most democratic way the people have said the water is public property,” says writer Eduardo Galeano. “And this is a way of saying to the owners of the world, the gentlemen of the market- we are not for sale!”

WATER AND TRAVELLERS
- AN IRISH REALITY
By Martha Fabregat

Travellers have always been part of Irish Society, but the reality is that the majority of Travellers have not benefited from the economic growth that Irish society has experienced in the past 20 years. Many Travellers are still at the end of the line, queuing to get a tap of clean water! Travellers and Traveller organisations have been pointing out the similarities between Travellers living without basic facilities like water and some communities in the south, the so called “third world countries.” The UN has proclaimed the years 2005 to 2015 as the decade of water for life and yet, according to the last survey in 2006, there are 101 Traveller families without access to water in Ireland. This is a clear violation of Travellers’ human rights, and one of the best hidden issues Irish society and politics.

“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water.” LORAN EISELEY, The Immense Journey, 1957
When water is scarce, polluted, or unaffordable, women suffer most acutely.

More than half of the 1.2 billion people who do not have access to water are women and girls. Research by UNIFEM2 highlights that in most countries of the South women are responsible for water management at the domestic and community level, women and girls use more than 8 hours a day travelling from 10 to 15 km. to transport between 20 and 15 litres of water in each trip. Men's role tends to be related more with agricultural work, selling water for domestic consumption and with the storage of water. This gender inequality has implications in women’s daily life: carrying water not only has impacts on women's physical health, but is a huge burden in terms of women’s time. When water is scarce, polluted, or unaffordable, women suffer most acutely. As economic providers, caregivers, and household managers, women are responsible for ensuring that their families have water for daily living. Where privatisation means that water is subject to user fees, women sometimes have to choose between eating and being able to rely on having water for daily chores.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) established that rural women’s health depends on adequate and non-discriminatory access to water. Other rights not usually associated with the right to water, but that directly affect women and girls, are the equal right to education and to political participation. Time invested on securing water excludes them from participating in decision-making processes, education, income generation, politics, leisure and recreation, advocating against poverty and improving their quality of life.

When water is scarce, polluted, or unaffordable, women suffer most acutely.

Participation of women in the Water War, Cochabamba, Bolivia

“The participation at the “water wars” helped us to believe in ourselves. We are not fighting for something that makes no sense; we are fighting for the truth; we are fighting for access to water for all, and one day, this will be recognised.”

“Even though we (women) participated at the water struggles in Cochabamba we were not considered to be part of the commission representing the Coordinación de Defensa del Agua y la Vida (the Coordinating Organisation for the Defence of Water and Life)... only men were involved in its organisation.

“Now I don’t want to continue to stay at home; I want to participate, because I have the same rights... because of this it is important to get organised, to train and to gain strength to participate and learn more.

“Our people of Bolivia have learned the importance of gender equality as a result of the right of access to water.”

Testimonies from the Workshop in 2001: Fundación Solón and Water Centre at the University of Mayor de San Simón (Bolivia)

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1 United Nations Development Fund for Women
2 All the water that will ever be is, right now*, National Geographic, October 1993
If you gave me several million years, there would be nothing that did not grow in beauty if it were surrounded by water.

JAN ERIK VOLD, What All The World Knows, 1970

More than 2.6 billion people – forty per cent of the world’s population – lack basic sanitation facilities, and over one billion people still use unsafe drinking water sources. In Latin America 60 million people still lack access to safe water and 134 million lack access to basic sanitation services. Children constitute almost half of those excluded, living in a reality which contributes to a deterioration of their health status, thus impinging on their rights to survival and development.

What does that mean for youth and children?

1. The toll on children is especially high. About 4,500 children die each day worldwide from unsafe water and lack of basic sanitation facilities. Countless others suffer from poor health, diminished productivity and missed opportunities for education.

2. The young and the old are particularly vulnerable. Over 90 per cent of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases due to unsafe water and sanitation in the developing world occur in children below 5 years old.

3. The poor are especially hard hit. A child born in Europe or the United States is 520 times less likely to die from diarrhoeal disease than an infant in sub-Saharan Africa, where only 36 per cent of the population can access hygienic sanitation.

4. Women and girls are the “water haulers” of the world. On average, women and girls in developing countries walk 6 kilometres a day, carrying 20 litres of water, greatly reducing the time they have for other productive work or for girls to attend school.

5. Waterborne illnesses & lack of access to clean water keep children out of school. Children suffering from trichuriasis (a water-borne disease) were in classes only half as much as their uninfected peers. And when schools lack toilets, girls will often not attend. Let’s of children and youth can’t attend school, because they have to collect water for their family.

Source: http://www.unicef.org/

1st International Meeting Water and Youth

When we speak about drinking the right to water, we can’t forget the new initiatives that young people around the world are bringing together. This is the case of the First International Meeting for Water and Youth that takes place in Buenos Aires the 12th and 14th of April, where hundreds of young people around the world meet to launch projects linked to water, whether they be to guarantee the right to access to safe water, promote integrated management of basins, affect public policy, to promote a new water culture, etc.

After the meeting, the participants have the great challenge of bringing to their communities lessons, tools, ideas, inspirations and commitment to work together for the right to water.

For further information, please visit http://waterandyouth.org/

Young Links: from Ballyfermot to Brazil

By Sally Flynn.

In July 2006 four groups of young people from different parts of the world travelled to Iguape in Brazil to participate in a Youth Exchange programme funded through Lernagach.

This trip, lifelong friends were made and the kindness and hospitality experienced was like nothing we experienced before. During the exchange we visited a community facing issues in terms of water and a large company wanting to build a dam in place of the community which would cause thousands of people to leave their homes. This particular community was opposing this development in fear that people could actually die during the process of the Dam being built.

We are looking forward to our friends from Brazil visiting Ireland in August 2007 to inform us of developments in terms of this issue.

1 Ireland’s National Agency for the management of transnational programmes in the areas of Youth Work, Primary and Secondary Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Lifelong Learning.
WATER AND DEBT
WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE
AND NOT A DROP TO DRINK!
Anne Reilly of Debt and Development
Coalition Ireland examines how the
World Bank and the Debt Crisis has
contributed to turning off the public
water supply in Bolivia.
At least 1.1 billion people do not have
access to a supply of clean water and
2.3 billion do not have access to
adequate sanitation.

Five thousand people die every day
because they lack clean water or
adequate sanitation – WHY?
In many countries around the world,
the World Bank and the International
Monetary Fund (IMF) have made
loans and debt cancellation
conditional to the privatisation of
water and other basic services.

Resistance in
El Alto
In 1997, a private company, Aguas del
Illimani – belonging to a consortium
led by the French giant Suez Lyonnaise
des Eaux de France – was granted a 30
year contract to supply water to the
city of El Alto by the Bolivian
government, as a result of a World
Bank loan condition. Citizens of El
Alto saw the price of water increase by
35%, while connection costs for water
and sewage rose to more than US$445.
This is more than six months salary for
people on the national minimum wage.
The result of the privatisation deal was
that tens of thousands of families were
excluded from receiving water.
The people of El Alto fought back,
demanding the termination of the
water contract. The government of the
time promised to take action but back-
tracked once the water company
threatened to bring a multi-million
dollar law suit against the Bolivian
government.

So who is really in charge in Bolivia?
What happened at El Alto shows the
massive influence of the World Bank
on the lives of Bolivians.

100% DEBT CANCELLATION AT WHAT COST? - WATER PRIVATISATION
DEBT CANCELLATION
but at what price?

There are other dangerous implications
of World Bank and IMF control as
well. For example, in an effort to avoid
World Bank and IMF conditions,
successive Bolivian governments have
chosen to take loans from other, more
expensive, domestic lenders instead.
This has resulted in an increased level
of domestic debts which the people of
Bolivia are now being forced to repay.

The recent election of the new
indigenous Bolivian president, Evo
Morales is giving some cause for hope.
Morales has promised to create a more
independent Bolivia. Time will tell if
his work results in building an
economy that truly serves the needs of
the people of Bolivia.

www.debteireland.org

"Water has no taste, no color, no odor; it cannot be defined, art relished while ever mysterious. Not necessary to life, but rather life itself. It fills
us with a gratification that exceeds the delight of the senses", ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY (1900-1944), Wind, Sand, and Stars, 1859
WATER AND CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

By Rachel Dempsey

Culture is at the heart of the battle for water in Latin America. As ‘culture’ frames the way we make sense of the world around us, it is central to the way we conceive and make use of vital elements such as water. Thus the fight against water privatization in Latin America has also been a transmutation and expression of centuries-old cultural values around water.

Latin American culture is highly influenced by indigenous American and African worldviews. Both of these, unlike scientific thought, do not necessarily separate the rational from the spiritual. People, plants, and animals and elements such as water are interconnected by webs of relations and obligations that are both ecological and social.

These values have fuelled and inspired the movement against water privatization in Latin America. In January 2000, the popular protests in Cochabamba, Bolivia were not only directed against the act of water privatization, but against its logic. To sell water is seen as not only illogical; it is also something that will upset the harmony and balance vital for life itself.

The origin of the Amazon

The Juruna Indians lived close to the forest where there was no river. A bird called Juriti owned the drinking water, which she kept in three barrels. One day, the children of chief Cinaã were thirsty. They went to Juriti and asked her for water. The Juruna community theatre “Teatro ‘Trono’ tackles the question “water for profit” or “water as spirit of life” through a dramatic mythology of water, a community-based performance piece called “La Asamblea de Los Dioses de Agua” (The Meeting of the Water Gods).

To a large extent, the future of water depends on whose world view, or culture, predominates. While science and technology can help harness and distribute water to many, it is the holistic approach which will ensure sustainability and prevent water scarcity from lining the pockets of a wealthy minority.

Ownership of water has been contentious for time immemorial.

The two other brothers kept on running, all the water now spilling from the barrels. That is how the Amazon river started. In Inka mythology for example, the peaks of their mountain home as an indicator of the serious sickness that threatens Mother Earth, caused by the Western man or younger brothers’ failure to appreciate and respect this subtle balance.

The centrality and sacredness of water is reflected in rituals, stories, rites and artistic expression from all over the region. In Inka mythology for example, Viracocha created the world from the water. The Bolivian community theatre “Teatro Trono” tackles the question “water for profit” or “water as spirit of life” through a dramatic mythology of water, a community-based performance piece called “La Asamblea de Los Dioses de Agua” (The Meeting of the Water Gods).

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The serious sickness that threatens Mother Earth, caused by the Western man or younger brothers’ failure to appreciate and respect this subtle balance.

The origin of the Amazon

The Juruna Indians lived close to the forest where there was no river. A bird called Juriti owned the drinking water, which she kept in three barrels. One day, the children of chief Cinaã were thirsty. They went to Juriti and asked her for water.

But Juriti wouldn’t give them any. ‘Go back to your father’, she said, ‘after all, he is the chief. Why doesn’t he get water for his own children?’

The children went home crying from thirst and told their father what had happened. ‘Don’t ever go to Juriti again’, said the chief to his children. ‘Her water barrels are full of fish. It’s too dangerous.

But they were tempted by this story and a while later they went back. When Juriti was not looking, they broke the barrels so that the water flowed out. When Juriti realised what had happened, she got very mad. The children were afraid and jumped back, but for one of the brothers, Rubiatá, it was too late. A big fish breezed out of one of the barrels swallowed him. Although it was a big fish, Rubiatá’s legs stuck out of its mouth. Meanwhile the other brothers started to run away carrying the open barrels. The water that spilt from the barrels turned into rivers and water falls. The big fish with two legs still sticking out of its mouth formed the Xingú river.

The two other brothers kept on running, all the water now spilling from the barrels. That is how the Amazon river started. In that big new river they found the fish and their brother, Rubiatá, already dead. But, when they cut out his legs and blew air into them, Rubiatá became human again. The children went back home after their adventure, and triumphantly told their father: ‘We broke the barrels and from now on we will have water and we will drink for ever.’
WATER, NEOLIBERALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The struggles of the 21st century show that water is essential for life, crucial for relieving poverty, hunger and disease and critical for economic development (UN Department of Technical Cooperation for Development). It is one of the most vital issues facing future human use of the environment. Climate change, deforestation, protection of biodiversity and desertification, are all connected to water resource management.

Water is the key to sustainable development. Caught between growing demands for freshwater on one hand and limited and increasingly polluted water supplies on the other, many developing countries face difficult choices. Populations continue to grow rapidly. Yet, there is no more water on earth now than there was 2000 years ago, when the population was less than 3% of its current size. Raising demands for water for irrigated agriculture, domestic consumption, and industry are forcing a hard competition over the allocation of scarce water resources among both areas and types of use.

USE AND ABUSE OF WATER FOR GOLD MINING IN CAJAMARCA

Not only fish and amphibians have disappeared from the Cajamarca rivers, in the Peruvian Andes, because of toxic waste from the Yanacocha Mine. Also, agriculturists and livestock owners who live in this area of the country are being drenched. Even the water for human consumption is threatened. Globalisation and the disregard of new economies have increased the price of metals to unprecedented levels.

In much of the world polluted water, improper waste disposal, and poor water management cause serious public health problems. Such water-related diseases as malaria, cholera, typhoid, and schistosomiasis harm or kill millions of people every year. Overuse and pollution of water supplies also are taking a heavy toll on the natural environment and pose increasing risks for many species of life.

The latest evaluation of the extracting industries of the World Bank Group, (owned by Newmount (American), Buenaventura (Peruvian) and the World Bank. Without water, indigenous communities are dead communities. For them, water is health, food, drink. It is life.

Despite this, channels for irrigation, lakes and streams have disappeared in the area surrounding Yanacocha, a mine owned by Newmount (American), Buenaventura (Peruvian) and the World Bank. Without water, indigenous communities are dead communities. For them, water is health, food, drink. It is life.

The acid, thus formed, extracts toxic metals and incorporates them into the rivers, killing all life and rendering them useless to the country people. Even the price of drinking water has increased for this reason.

For more information see: http://www.miningwatch.com/ and http://www.earthwebgold.com/ (www.earthwebgold.com) works on accountability development of communities which are close to mines, environmental monitoring, environmental education and produces news bulletins and flora and fauna inventories.

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FURTHER READING

1. Books available from LASC’s library and Bookshop
   AA. VV., Reclaiming Public Water, CEO
   Barlow M., Clarke T., Blue gold, The New Press
   Black, Maggie, The No-Nonsense Guide to Water, New Internationalist - Verso
   Chico, Oscar, Cochahuamal, The Water War in Baja, South End Press
   Vandana Shiva, Water Wars, South End Press
   AA.VV., Testing the Water, CIIR Progressio

2. Websites:
   http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/
   http://www.waterinfofemale.org/
   http://www.sisik.org/cruwrg_informes/1035 Water%20corporations
   http://www.wdm.org.uk/campaigns/water/
   http://www.tappedwaternow.org/
   http://www.wateraid.org/uk/default.asp
   http://www.worldwaterwatch.com/
   http://www.codha.org.uk/en/initiatives/right_to_water/
   http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/nature/2882349.stm
   http://www.onsda.org.mx/
   http://www.greenforum.org
   http://americas.irc-online.org/am/2883
   http://www.corporateeurope.org/miniBleqminu.html
   http://www.i-s-w.org/c/index.html
   http://www.micanet.org/let_the_rivers_run.php
   http://www.waterandyouth.org/english/index.htm
   http://www.twm.ca.tar.org
   http://www.wdp.org/water/crosscutting/genderguide/index.html
   http://www.wesomewayscampaign.com/
   http://www.tringua.com/
   http://laredvida.org/modules/news/
   http://www.wfswatch.org/
   www.stopcorporatetrauma.org
   http://www.wdm.org.uk/
   www.monitoringglobalisation.org
   www.isf.es
   http://www.waterandyouth.org/english/index.htm
   http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/
   http://www.ecofondo.org.co/
   http://www.accionecologica.org/webae/index.php
The Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC), founded in 1996, is an initiative for development education, campaigning solidarity and cultural action, linking Ireland and Latin America.

**LASC VISION**
LASC believes in a Latin America and an Ireland based on equality, social justice and an equal expression of cultural, social, political and economic rights for all human beings.

**LASC MISSION**
LASC’s mission is to expose and challenge the current economic, social and cultural injustices in Latin America and Ireland, through public awareness raising, education, information exchanges and campaigns in solidarity with the people of Latin America who resist oppression and struggle to create a fair and inclusive society.

**LASC WORK**

**Campaigning Solidarity**
LASC is primarily a campaigning organisation aimed at organising solidarity in Ireland with the people of Latin America and the Caribbean in their struggle for independent development and control of their resources. With its campaigning work, LASC hopes to bring about changes in the attitudes, policies and practices of individuals and institutions.

LASC is committed to stand together with the popular movements that struggle for social justice. Our actions must be led by them, responding to needs identified by individuals and communities, especially ones that experience poverty and marginalisation.

**Development Education**
LASC realises that development education is essential for effective campaigning and awareness raising. Through participatory methodologies, LASC provides the tools for analysis of the development issues raised, and encourages learners to participate in finding solutions to them, including the possibility of participating in LASC campaigns.

**Cultural Action**
LASC values cultural diversity and engages in activities and actions which raise real awareness of Latin American cultures. LASC wishes to reflect the true multi-faceted nature of human experience in Latin America and celebrates the expression of the resilience and survival of its peoples.

**********JOIN LASC!**********

**MEMBERSHIP PER CALENDAR YEAR:**

- **Waged** €25
- **Unwaged** €10

**Name:** ......................................................................................................................................................................

**Address:** ..................................................................................................................................................................

**Ph. No:** ............................................................ **E-mail:** ...................................................... ................................

If you would like to be notified of LASC’s events, please tick the box below to subscribe to our weekly electronic bulletin.

**PAYMENT METHODS:**

1. Cheque / postal order. Please send us a crossed cheque payable to the Latin America Solidarity Centre at the address below. Please do not send cash.

2. Standing Order. We would prefer payment by Standing Order as it would give us an indication of future income with which to plan our activities. Also, payment by cheque through the Post has lead to loss in the past.

**STANDING ORDER FORM**

To the manager of (name and address of bank) ______________________________

Please pay LASC, Bank of Ireland, St Stephen’s Green, Dublin 2.

Account no 75989044 ; Branch sort code 90-00-84

The sum of (in writing) __________________________________________________________________________

Annually /quarterly / monthly (please cross off as appropriate) starting on

and thereafter every year /quarter / month (please cross off as appropriate) until further notice

debiting my account number (your account number)

Your signature_______________________________ Please return to: **LASC, 5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2**