

In defence of collective ownership

Against the greedy hands of capitalism and bureaucratic state management

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

21 May 2010

The Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici supports the initiatives in defence of the public ownership of water, including the campaign for a referendum by the Forum Acqua Bene Comune which seeks to repeal three articles from laws concerning the environment, energy and economic development, as well as opposing the obligatory enforcement of EU regulations.

By means of these articles, local authorities will be obliged to tender out the running of water services to private companies or mixed public-private bodies where the latter must hold the majority of shares (70% within 2015, with a progressive increase from public to private in companies which are entirely public or mixed).

We are aware that the management of collective resources and property by publicly-run bodies generally produces bad services and bad resource management, as a result of the inevitable ignorance on the part of the state bureaucratic apparatus of the needs and wishes of local communities. We are also aware that this translates into social difficulties, especially for the poorer levels of the population.

However, we are aware too — because bitter experience has taught us — that the management of collective resources by free-market capitalism only produces even worse conditions in the material life of the working class and the poorest elements of society, since private management turns inalienable collective resources such as water into just another commodity to be traded in the capitalist market, and therefore subject to the laws of profit and to the speculative caprices of that market.

Not only do they want to impose top-down management of a resource on us, leaving us at the whims of private managers. It will also lead to dearer water, given that it is highly unlikely that the investment required to maintain or improve the service to acceptable standards will now be forthcoming. The ruthless law of the market will force private companies to keep the cost-benefit ratio as low as possible.

And even if this law of the market were not to function well, our legislators have come up with a plan to save private capital, thanks to a gift to private investors under Article 154 of Legislative Decree No.152/2006, one of the three that the Forum is seeking to appeal, which guarantees profit to the service provider by means of a fixed 7% levy which we will pay through our water bills in order to cover the risks of the invested capital.

For these reasons, members of the Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici will be supporting all initiatives and struggles to oppose the privatization of water, including the collection of signatures needed to call the referendum at tables set up by various grassroots organizations, together with any future initiatives in defence of publicly owned and managed water in preparation for a referendum.

We know that free-market capitalist attacks on the living conditions of the poorer social classes will not end with this attempt to speculate on water. It is a tendency that affects all our collective resources, and referendums alone will never be able to stop the two-headed bloodsucker of State and Capital.

Autonomous self-management of vital resources throughout the territory, by means of direct control by local bodies of producers, is possible and necessary if we do not wish to see the environment in which we live be definitively and irreversibly ruined by the greed for profit of capitalist oligarchies, or left to deteriorate under state bureaucratism.

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