

Corporations / Agencies

1. The World Bank

The World Bank is an international financial institution that was established at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 to help reconstruct post WWII Europe. For the past 50 years the World Bank has transitioned to providing loans to governments in developing countries in order to improve infrastructure. In theory this may sound innocuous, but World Bank policies have devastated local and indigenous communities and increased the developing world's debt crisis. Indebted nations who wish to borrow money from the World Bank have to agree to a number of structural adjustment plans and privatization measures that have including the privatization of publicly owned water and sanitation utilities. As a governing body the World Bank is less than democratic. Decisions rest in the hands of members from wealthy nations and 51% of the funding for the World Bank comes from the US Treasury, making the World Bank an arm of US foreign policy. In short, the World Bank has escalated neo-liberal policies by promoting unfettered free markets, export-oriented economies, reduced protections for domestic industries, weakened labor laws, and slack environmental standards.

2. Veolia Environnement

Veolia, based in France, and previously named Vivendi Environnement, is the largest water and waste-water corporation in the world and a major benefactor of World Bank privatization schemes. Veolia earned more than \$48 billion in revenue in 2007 and operates in over 67 countries in Europe, North America, China, North Africa, and the Middle East where it services over 110 million people. Veolia's US subsidiary Veolia Water North America is the largest water contractor in the US despite substandard service. In 2002, Veolia signed a 20-year contract for \$1.1 billion to provide water to over one million people in the Indianapolis area. Since then Veolia has been taken to court for falsifying water quality reports and City-County Council Members have complained that Veolia has cut back on employees, water testing, purification measures, and maintenance. *Men's Health* magazine ranked Indianapolis the 2nd worst drinking water in the country, 99 out of 100 for large cities.

3. Suez Environnement

Suez, based in France, is the second largest water and waste-water corporation in the world. In 2002, Suez operated in 130 countries in Europe, North America, China, North Africa, and the Middle East, and serviced over 115 million people. Anti-privatization campaigns in the southern hemisphere caused Suez to begin withdrawing from many developing countries in 2003 and they have subsequently focused on new markets, including the United States. Suez purchased United Water in 2000 and operates in over 26 states. US citizens have reason for concern. In Sydney, Australia, high levels of the parasites *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium* were found in the water system due to mis-measurement of the concentrations of microbes in the water supply. In 2004, Atlanta,

Georgia cancelled its 20-year contract with Suez/United Water, the biggest such contract in the U.S., after just four years due to poor performance.

4. RWE

RWE, based in Germany, is one of the largest energy corporations in the world with revenues of more than \$50 billion. When RWE acquired Thames Water (UK) in 2003 it became the third largest global water and waste-water company. Due to anti-privatization campaigns in the developing world, RWE has been focusing heavily on US markets. The potential profitability of privatizing US water systems is staggering, considering that 85% of residents obtain water from public municipalities.

5. Bechtel

The San Francisco-based Bechtel Corporation is primarily known for its role as a lead contractor in the reconstruction of Iraq. Less known is Bechtel's role in the water wars in Bolivia. In 1999, the World Bank instructed officials in Cochabamba to privatize the city's municipal water supply company, Servicio Municipal del Agua Potable y Alcantarillado (SENIAPA) or else forfeit \$600 million in international debt relief. City officials agreed and Aguas del Tunari, a subsidiary of Bechtel took over. Residents quickly saw monthly water fees skyrocket to \$20 per month in a city where minimum wage is less than \$100 per month. Water shut-offs escalated and residents were required to have permits to access community wells and to harvest rainwater. Bechtel was even granted the power to seize the homes of delinquent customers. In response, citizens formed *La Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida (The Coalition in Defense of Water and Life)* in January 2000. Mass demonstrations led to a general strike in Cochabamba that brought all transportation to a standstill. In April, the Bolivian government declared martial law, censored the media, and opened fire on demonstrators, killing three people and injuring over 30. On April 10, 2000 the people's movement won when Bechtel was kicked out of the country and officials in Cochabamba were forced to revoke its water privatization legislation.

6. Nestlé

The Swiss corporation Nestlé dominates the bottled water industry, owning over 70 brands including Perrier, Ice Mountain, Poland Springs, Calistoga, and Arrowhead. Nestlé operates in over 33 countries and has bottling facilities in over 15 US states. Nestlé Waters has been under increased scrutiny for pumping excessive amounts of spring water from rivers, lakes, and aquifers, and then selling the water for 1,000 times the cost of tap water. Protracted struggles in the US against Nestlé have taken place in Shapleigh, Maine, Mecosta County, Michigan, McCloud, California, Florida, and Texas to stop Nestlé from removing hundreds of millions of gallons of fresh water each year. Excessive pumping has led to significant drops in groundwater, altering the level and flows of springs, lakes, rivers, and drinking wells. Brad Willis, Vice-President of *Save Our Springs*, a group that has organized against a Perrier bottling plant near Orlando,

Florida warns those in other states “Don’t let them get their foot in the door. Get them out.”

7. SAUR

SAUR, based in France, is a water and waste-water corporation that operates in France, Spain, Central Europe, the Middle East, West Africa, and Latin America. SAUR announced in 2007 that it was withdrawing from many Latin American countries, a move that was likely based upon the rise of anti-privatization movements in developing nations.

8. Thames Water

German company RWE bought Thames Water in 2003 to become the third largest water and waste-water company in the world. Thames Water, based in England, manages RWE’s international water business, including American Water Works (the largest publicly held US-water based utility with 16 million customers in over 29 states.) Residents in the US have reason to worry considering Thames Water track record in England and Wales. In 2004, Thames Water supplied rust-colored water to residents of Spencers Wood, Shinfield, Reading, and Berkshire and was fined £24,000. In September 2007, 5km of the Wandle River was polluted by Thames Water resulting in more fines.

9. Grupo Agbar

Agbar, also known as Aguas de Barcelona, is based in Barcelona, Spain and is one of the largest water and water-waste companies in the world. Agbar is present in North America, South America, Asia, and Europe. In 2008, Suez and Criteria CaixaCorp acquired Agbar, controlling 90% of Agbar’s shares.

10. Remondis

Remondis, based in Germany, is emerging as one of the largest international water and waste corporations. Remondis operates in over 26 countries, including China, Japan, Taiwan, India, Australia, and New Zealand.

11. Coca-Cola

Five to nine liters of clean water are needed to produce one liter of soda, a quantity that has led to aquifers drying up near soda bottling plants. In 2002, women from Plachimada, India began a vigil in front of a Coca-Cola plant to protest the bottling plant for polluting local water systems and extracting excessive amounts of groundwater. In 2004, the state government ordered the Coca-Cola plant to shut down. The government of Kerala is now seeking compensation from Coca-Cola for crop failures and illnesses. Coca-Cola has also been criticized for human-rights abuses in Columbia for complicity in allowing its main bottling company to hire paramilitary mercenaries to assassinate union leaders.

12. Perrier/Ice Mountain

Perrier, a subsidiary of Nestlé, has drawn fierce community opposition for drawing excessive amounts of water from an underground aquifer in Mecosta County (45 miles north of Grand Rapids) and bottling it through their Ice Mountain label. Perrier/Ice Mountain began pumping in May 2002 after they obtained a 99-year lease on a hunting preserve, paid an annual well fee of \$85, and built a bottling factory. In turn, they have pumped upwards of 270 million gallons per year and have made millions of dollars in profit. To add insult to injury, Michigan gave Nestlé tax abatements totaling \$9.5 million dollars to operate the bottling plant that employs non-union workers. The Michigan Supreme Court ruled in 2009 in favor of Nestlé, allowing the company to pump an average of 218 gallons per minute (down from 500 gallons) with restrictions during spring and summer withdrawals. *Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation* sued Nestlé in 2001 for causing damage to lakes, streams, and wetlands.

Victories

1. Cochabamba, Bolivia

In 1999, the World Bank instructed officials in Cochabamba to privatize the city's municipal water supply company, Servicio Municipal del Agua Potable y Alcantarillado (SENIAPA), or else forfeit \$600 million in international debt relief. City officials agreed and Aguas del Tunari, a subsidiary of Bechtel took over. Residents quickly saw monthly water fees skyrocket to \$20 per month in a city where minimum wage is less than \$100 per month. Water shut-offs escalated and residents were required to have permits to access community wells and to harvest rainwater. Bechtel was even granted the power to seize the homes of delinquent customers. In response, citizens formed *La Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida (The Coalition in Defense of Water and Life)* in January 2000. Mass demonstrations led to a general strike in Cochabamba that brought all transportation to a standstill. In April, the Bolivian government declared martial law, censored the media, and opened fire on demonstrators, killing three people and injuring over 30. On April 10, 2000 the people's movement won when Bechtel was kicked out of the country and officials in Cochabamba were forced to revoke its water privatization. The community group *La Coordinadora del Agua* was formed to make sure that the city's water company, SEMAPA, would include public participation and democratic principles as it attempted to rebuild itself, despite incurring massive debt from the previous mismanagement by Bechtel.

2. San Francisco, California

In 2002, the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco voted to cancel a \$45 million program management contract with the Bechtel Corporation for the reconstruction of the Hetch public water system. The contract was canceled when an investigative story by the *San*

Francisco Bay Guardian detailed widespread corruption, financial mismanagement, and poor performance by Bechtel.

3. Felton, California

A six-year community-led movement in Felton, California in Santa Cruz County reclaimed public ownership of Felton's water utility from California American Water (Cal-Am), a subsidiary of American Water (owned by RWE, the third largest water and waste corporation in the world.)

4. Detroit, Michigan

The *People's Water Board of Detroit* was formed in 2009 in response to the crisis of water shut offs in Detroit and Highland Park that occurred when private companies were brought in to manage public water utilities. The privatization measures resulted in huge rate increases (some residents receiving water bills between \$5,000-10,000) and over 45,000 Detroit area residents having their water shut off during a three year span for failing to pay their bills. The *People's Water Board* note, "We believe water is a human right and all people should have access to clean and affordable water. Water is a commons that should be held in the public trust free of privatization. The *People's Water Board* promotes awareness of the interconnectedness of all people and resources."

5. Paris, France

In 2010, Paris overturned water privatization and regained public control of its water utility, despite the influence of two of the largest water corporations (Veolia and Suez) which are based in France.

6. El Alto, Bolivia

A community-led movement in 2005 forced the Bolivian government to cancel its contract with Suez who failed to provide water to more than 200,000 people and charged connection fees of \$445(US) to residents in a country where the minimal wage is under \$100(US) per month. The movement resulted in the creation of a water utility that is run under local governance with public participation and full transparency.

7. Netherlands

A law banning the privatization of public water systems was passed in the Netherlands in September 2004.

8. Shapleigh, Maine

In 2009, a community movement in Shapleigh, Maine (population 2,325) successfully banned companies from drawing and selling its spring water. The campaign focused on

Poland Springs (owned by Nestlé) that had drawn upwards of 700 million gallons per year from eight sites across the state.

9. Kerala, India

In 2002, women from Plachimada, India began a vigil in front of a Coca-Cola plant to protest the bottling plant for polluting local water systems and extracting excessive amounts of groundwater. In 2004, the state government ordered the Coca-Cola plant to shut down. The government of Kerala is now seeking compensation from Coca-Cola for crop failures and illnesses.

10. Crandon, Wisconsin

For 28 years (1976-2003) a coalition of Native and non-Native activists organized to stop a proposed zinc and copper mine near Crandon, Wisconsin and the Mole Lake Ojibwe Reservation which would have poisoned the Wolf River. Former-Governor Tommy Thompson supported the mine. A procession of multinational mining giants, EXXON, Rio Algom, and Billeton marched into Wisconsin, yet were defeated by a grass roots movement. In 2003, the Sokaogon Ojibwe and Forest County Potawatomi purchased the mine site, marking a major victory against corporate power.

11. Atlanta, Georgia

City officials in Atlanta, Georgia canceled its 20-year contract with Suez/United Water, the biggest such contract in the U.S at the time, after four years of service and numerous problems with maintenance.

12. Bogota, Columbia

Despite pressure from the World Bank to privatize, the Water and Sewerage Company of Bogota (EAAB) remained in public hands while raising the proportions of households with potable water from 78% to 95% between 1993 and 2001.

13. Porto Alegre, Brazil

Porto Alegre is home to Departamento Municipal do Agua e Esgoto (DMAE), a publicly owned water company. DMAE is a not-for-profit company where community members decide upon investment strategies and budget priorities. Today, 99.5% of Porto Alegre residents have access to clean water, while paying some of the lowest water prices in Brazil.

14. Chile

In 2009, Chile's Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in favor of indigenous water rights when they denied the Agua Mineral Chusmiza corporation the right to bottle and sell fresh water from the water source used by Aymara indigenous peoples. The historic

ruling also prevented mining projects from taking place in areas that would impact the water quality.

15. Uruguay

In 2000, the Uruguayan government signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to privatize the nation's water and sanitation systems. Four years of public opposition challenged the deal and led to a petition drive that gathered signatures from 10% of the population, placing the issue of water privatization to a vote. In October 2004, a constitutional measure passed with 60% of the vote stating that water systems would be returned to public ownership.

16. Narmada River, India

In 1989, the *Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement)*, or NBA for short, formed to protest the damming of the Narmada River which had displaced hundreds of thousands of people in India, mostly underprivileged castes and Adivasi tribes. NBA staged hunger strikes, blockaded freeways, and united thousands in mass protests at the dam site. The strength of NBA's non-violent resistance compelled the World Bank to withdraw from the Narmada Dam project. Despite the success of the movement, the Indian government continues to push for big dam development projects.

17. New Haven, Wisconsin

In 2001, a community-led movement in New Haven, Wisconsin in Adams County prevented Perrier (owned by Nestlé) from obtaining permits to pump 500 gallons of water per-minute from aquifers near the Mecan Springs Natural Area, despite the support of former governor Tommy Thompson. The victory was partial as Nestlé opened a bottling plant in Mecosta County, Michigan where they have operated for over a decade.

18. Bundanoon, Australia

In 2009, the small town of Bundanoon, Australia (est. population 2,500) voted to completely ban bottled water, citing concerns over the tremendous amount of resources used to extract, package, and transport it. The decision to ban bottled water outright was in response to community opposition towards a bottling company seeking to extract water from aquifers in the town. The bottling plant proposal was defeated and filtered water fountains were installed in the city.