

## COMMUNITIES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Plans to introduce water rates in the South of Ireland had to be dropped because people made it clear that they just wouldn't pay. We don't agree with the government's plans for our water service, we know that they are not in our interests so why would we go along with them?

Taking action with our neighbours – petitioning, demonstrating and saying “No to water charges” and “No to water privatisation” can put a stop to this.

### CHECKLIST -What can you do?



- Contact your local MLA
- Bring a petition around your estate
- Put a “we're not paying” poster in your window
- Get some of these leaflets and distribute them
- Organise a meeting in your area

Communities Against the Water Charges works with the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network. You can contact us by email [info@niapn.org](mailto:info@niapn.org) or post NIAPN, 58 Howard Street, Belfast BT1 6PJ

# Communities Against the Water Tax

## KEEP WATER IN PUBLIC HANDS



*The government plans to hand over our water service to private interests. They are afraid of opposition, so they are doing it step by step*

In April 2007 the government plans to make *our* water service into a Go-Co (a government-owned company). Then in 2008 they intend handing our water over to a private water company to run.

**They say we have no choice but to pay...  
Communities say we're not paying twice!!**

### **OUR BEST INTERESTS—we know what they are!**

The original reason for keeping our water service in public hands was about health - to ensure a healthy and affordable resource for all. Creating a Go-Co is a step towards introducing privatisation. When services were privatised in Scotland, households faced a 120% price increase in one year. Clearly this option is not in our best interests!

### **WHAT A LEGACY—A history of Underinvestment!**

25% of our water is leaking away under the ground, so we need long-term investment in sorting the infrastructure. What we have heard recently about English water companies shows that privatisation of our water service will *not* bring about improved infrastructure – Thames Water, the biggest private company admits that a third of its water is *still* leaking away. So the profits have been taken *out* but the investment has not gone *in*.

### **METERS—Just not an option!**

Water shortages are not a significant problem in Northern Ireland. As with waste management, changes in usage can be brought about through education,

The proposed introduction of water meters is not intended as a water conservation measure or even a means of saving on your bills – it is a device to weaken opposition to privatisation. The bulk of the bills are going to be standing charges anyway, so even those who opt for a meter will end up with big and growing bills.

### **CAN'T PAY and WON'T PAY**

70% of our population earn less than the average wage and can't afford these water charges. Planned charges are based on the market value of homes. The average will be about £400 a year to start (phased in 2007-2010) but we know from England that once water is privatised, and a separate stream of income or revenue flow for private industry is established, the charges will soar.

In response to campaigning, an "affordability tariff" has been introduced limiting water charges for 200,000 of the poorest households to not more than £90 a year in 2007, rising to £180 a year in 2009. That's still £4 a week that the poorest households will have to find. Also this tariff is only funded for three years, so after that there is no guarantee that the poorest households won't be charged the full whack.

### **THIS CAN BE STOPPED!**

The government needs to know the extent of our opposition to their plans. Our elected representatives need to be galvanized into action now. They would be doing themselves a favour to find a way of getting these plans stopped now. When the Assembly is up and running again people will expect our political parties, who all claim to oppose water charges and privatisation to reverse them immediately.

### **WE'RE NOT PAYING TWICE!**

In the South of Ireland and across the world, the introduction of water charges has been stopped by one thing only—a mass campaign of non-payment. A non-payment campaign is now official policy for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Community groups across Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic have also stated support for a non-payment campaign.