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### A message to SIPTU members, delegates and staff.

*Water worker and SIPTU member John Mullins tells it like it is in the struggle to keep water public*

My name is John Mullins, and I am a water services worker with cork City Council. I am also a SIPTU shop steward representing my colleagues, and this is my 40th year as a SIPTU member. I am one of the water services workers who have been protesting around the country over the last few months.

We take no pleasure whatsoever in protesting against our union, but we feel that we have no other option as our union is not listening to our call for a democratic ballot on the framework document.

Prior to talks beginning we were promised 3 things and we have these promises in emails from SIPTU officials.

#### Promise 1.

SIPTU would negotiate on our behalf, but no agreement could be reached without workers being consulted and balloted first. The service level agreement would then be In place until 2026 and beyond. This promise has been reneged on.

#### Promise 2.

All unions agreed that no agreement could take place without the wording and date for a referendum on the public ownership of water services.

In fact, they said that it was a red line issue. This promise has been reneged on.

#### Promise 3.

Workers were told that they would not be at any financial loss and that there would be no change to our terms and conditions. We were not told that on transfer to Irish water we would lose our public sector status - a massive change to our terms and conditions.

We now know that the LGMA have serious issues with our allowances and red circled overtime and are indicating that they cannot honour these, which will put workers at a massive financial loss. This is another massive change to our terms and conditions. Despite this, we are being told that this is the only deal in town! Water services workers cannot and will not accept this deal.

Contrary to what some in SIPTU have said we are not scaremongering, we are not spreading false information and we are not troublemakers, in fact we are hardworking public sector workers with families and mortgages and will fight tooth and nail to protect our hard-earned terms and conditions, even if that means making very tough decisions.

We firmly believe that we will not see a referendum during the lifetime of the current government, our reasoning for this is as follows; Fianna fail are open to a referendum, but it is dependent on the wording. Fine Gael and The Green Party do not want a referendum. Leo Varadkar is on record as saying that there is no need for a referendum, Eamon Ryan would introduce water charges tomorrow morning if he could.

When the IMF came to this country to sell off what they could, they were astonished to find that citizens did not pay for water, they couldn't believe that there wasn't a water utility to sell to a private company, they instructed government to set up a national water utility and eventually sell it off, we believe that this is the next step in their plan.

Fine Gael's policy is to privatise as much public services as it can. Our refuse collection is now private and they after our water, what's next? Our housing, our roads, our parks our cleaning?

We must fight to keep our public services in local authorities and that includes our water, it is a well-known fact that countries with strong public services have strong economies, but this government is more interested in looking after big businesses than looking after the real people who keep this country going. Just look what their housing policy has done to this country with record homelessness figures amid a never-before-seen housing crisis, look at the chaos in our hospitals despite the best efforts of our brilliant nurses and doctors.

Despite all of this, our union are prepared to get into bed with this corrupt government?!!

In fact, recently FF/FG and Greens voted against Joan Collins' amendment to name the referendum date before January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, what does that tell us?

I would suggest to my union SIPTU that they think long and hard before agreeing this deal in its current form. Do you want your legacy to be that of the union which helped facilitate the privatisation of our public water? I for one would not want to be a member of that union!

Water services workers propose that the following wording for our referendum would be inserted into the constitution.:

***“The government shall be collectively responsible for the protection, management and maintenance of the public water system, the government shall ensure, in the public interest, that this resource remains in public ownership and management”***

In conclusion, and on behalf of the water services workers of Ireland, I want to thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak to you today, and I am appealing to SIPTU to ballot members on the framework document, failing to do so would be undemocratic, morally wrong and would go against all trade union principles.

On behalf of water services workers, that if balloted I promise to respect the result of the ballot. After all, democracy will have spoken.

**This is one promise that will not be reneged on!**

The **RED** Network (incorporating Rebel Telly) are a network of radical socialists within the political party People Before Profit, a 32-county people power movement on the island of Ireland.

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