

Market Outlook:

A big miss

Is public access to potable water the domain of government, science/technology, capitalism, or ethicists?

The most interesting part of that question is whether it should have to be a question at all. While we know that water already is a utility in most states/countries, like oil and gas, electricity, sewage, etc., to what extent can there be specific rules and regulations to ensure that all the ethical, moral, and financial issues are addressed uniformly and globally to everyone's benefit?

At the very least, with more than two-thirds of the planet covered by water, and concurrently deadly drought conditions overwhelming many regions, there is room for discussion about what role we all play in addressing these issues for ourselves and generations to follow.

For the sake of argument, let's agree that at least two points of view maintain:

First, there are those who think that government provides for the common good of its citizens.

Secondly, some argue that private enterprise is the best provider, and that if one "chooses to" live where there is no access to water, it's their own fault for doing so.

Obviously, on either side of a paradigm issue, both answers might seem a bit harsh. I agree, neither opinion is "right" or without flaws.

Sorry state

Water influences life as we know it. Science identifies it as the building block to mankind's existence. We launch spacecraft to search the galaxies looking for signs of water and the origins of other "life forms". As a priority, there is none higher than maintaining the purity of our own planet's natural resources, including water. Why, then, is there any difference of opinion about how we treat the commodity, and how we regulate access to it for the rest of our fellow global inhabitants?

The bigger issue, I would posit, is allowing any inherent monopoly to capitalize, literally and figuratively, upon building channels of distribution for this most basic of commodities. In any business, the two primary elements towards profitability are access and distribution. When we allow water to become an access-only commodity, we condemn a portion of the consumer base to exclusion....no matter the cost. In this instance, exclusion equals thirst, famine, poverty, politics, and marginalized populations.

There is not enough money in the world to be gained (earned) to justify making water a profit-based proposition.

Today, channels of distribution and access to clean water are already controlled by a few major players. Rather than a globally compassionate approach, control of potable water is regionalized, nay localized, for most persons. Because we have "competition" for creation of and access to clean water, we also have by definition "losers" in the game.

It's time to face facts: water is not nor should be treated as a bonus or prize that goes to the highest, or most efficient, bidder. In fifteen years, you don't want to be the one on the losing side of that equation.

However, the degree to which we already take plentiful access for granted says a lot about our business, political, spiritual, and moral infrastructure. It is time we show an inclination to meet the capitalists and ethicists half-way so that "competition" is not a dirty word, and we witness a win-win possibility for both sides.

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