

Bill 19 -Déjà vu, All Over Again

March 4, 2009

If you thought **BILL 46** was a threat to property owners and to the democratic rights of all Albertans, **BILL 19**, presented by Drumheller-Stettler MLA, Jack Hayden, for first reading in the Alberta Legislature on Monday, March 2, makes its predecessor look like a babe-in-arms. This Bill takes the notion of expropriation to a whole new level.

Bill 46, passed by PC MLA's in the middle of the night on December 5, 2007, stretched the limits of democracy by effectively taking away the rights of citizens to a public hearing, to fair and timely notice of any potential hearing, and even changed the name of the EUB, to distance that government Board from its prior illegal use of spies, bias, etc. against the public.

But, apparently, that was not enough to keep utilities corporations and the new AUC (read EUB) safe from the perils of the Alberta citizenry. The new Bill 19 will further allow any Cabinet Minister, through the Lieutenant-Governor, to make regulations "respecting the removal of any buildings, improvements, materials or animals from the Project Area." In other words, as I read it, you WILL BE REMOVED from your property, at the discretion of the Minister.

Furthermore, you will have only seven days to mount an appeal, and the qualification for serving notification on the landowner is sketchy, at best. For example, you could conceivably be away on holidays and come home to find your farmstead demolished and that notice had been served in the newspaper or to an unknown neighbour while you were away.

If you should be fortunate enough to receive proper notice and quick enough to find a good lawyer to stage an appeal within the seven days, you will face an appeal panel appointed by the very Minister who is authorizing the confiscation of your property!

And, should you decide to interfere with, object to, or resist, an order from the Minister to vacate your property, or to refuse to accept a price determined as fair by the Minister for your holdings, you will probably not even be allowed a hearing by the already suspect Surface Rights Board. The mandate of Bill 19 will apparently supersede the Surface Rights Act.

And, as a last crippling slap in the face of democracy and the people of this province, if you should persist in your objections, and, if the Minister even **thinks** you may be going to oppose the expropriation of your property, you will be served with an injunction to cease the activities that the Minister **thought** you were going to partake in! Failure to comply will result in a maximum

\$100,000.00 fine, 2 years in the slammer, or any combination thereof, and you will be permitted to pay the costs.

Back in the early 1920's, Thomas Crerar, leader of that era's Progressive Party said that his party represented "all who desire to see purity in the government restored, who desire to see public morality supplant public corruption, who desire to sweep away abuse of the function of government for the advancement of the privileged few."

Who says history doesn't repeat itself? If you are a property owner, I'd be picking up a copy of Bill 19 and reading it over very carefully. We know that with a 72-seat PC majority in the Alberta Legislature, there is no hope of stopping this Bill, but maybe it's once again time, almost 90 years later, to consider the words of Thomas Crerar.

Edwin Erickson
Buck Lake, AB
780-682-2368