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### Literary License With Incense

For diverse targets and polished rhetoric it would be hard to match a recent review of the Lanark Landowners Association (LLA) by a self-styled freelance writer. This rambling indictment covers the usual litany of grievances to which left-leaning social engineers devote so much time and attention. The composition reveals, apart from disdainful appraisal of the LLA and its energetic leader, Randy Hillier, a subtle “talent” for disparaging multi-national corporations, politicians from The Other Side, perceived anti-feminism, rebel farmers and any supporters of legislated ownership rights in Canada, all very much in line with what might be expected given the qualifications, personal motivation and background sponsor of its creator.

On the other hand a loosely structured coalition of landowner organizations, the Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance (OPERA) has promoted constitutional property rights for landowners, i.e. land rights, since 1994. Among its members and adherents are citizen groups, farm federations, trade associations, municipal officials and, we’re proud to report, the LLA. However, a shared resolve to resurrect in Canada the core principle of human progress, the right to own private real estate, is neither recent nor exclusive. A privately chartered Constitutional Committee in Alberta has long advocated legislated land rights and founders of an existing Ontario organization have expended a good deal of time and effort to the same end for almost 30 years.

Under the OPERA mandate “to protect, and entrench in law, the rights and responsibilities of landowners against arbitrary government decisions and restrictions” each member organization develops its own agenda. In that context, over the past two years LLA has created more public demand for government accountability and ignited more public sympathy for rural landowners victimized by lack of land rights than any contemporary group anywhere in Canada. OPERA is neither authorized nor qualified to encourage or condemn the activities of its associate members but we admire the dedication and applaud the courage of the LLA in pursuing its stated objectives. On that congratulatory note, we suggest any sweeping denouncement of the Rural Revolution is and of itself a tribute to LLA achievements. Since it seems that disapproval finds eloquent expression in hardball protests by mutinous serfs, we take it the Boston Tea Party would not have been a preferred social event for anti-LLA authors. Still, that particular uprising and the one more recently germinated in Lanark County spring from similar roots. After months of fruitless discussion with rigid bureaucracy the former rejected taxation without representation. After years of fruitless discussion with arrogant bureaucracy the latter is rejecting expropriation without compensation. Same endless dialogue, same official inaction, same smoldering resentment; Different bureaucrats!

So much for background; let’s cut to the chase. OPERA is a network research and communication centre for its members and claims no expertise or inclination to debate socialistic dogma with the author or publisher of the literary diatribe here in question. We acknowledge but don’t share distaste for multi-national corporations many of which provide gainful employment and shareholder profits for thousands of Canadians perhaps including, for all we know, freelance authors & their unidentified sponsors. We note but don’t agree with a low opinion of governance in the United States where the linchpin for Canada’s economic health traditionally resides. We recognize but don’t endorse sly linking of legitimate protest to right wing political intrigue which merely demeans free speech. We witness but can’t accept the perception that LLA aggressiveness somehow abuses all women. This type of anxiety speaks volumes about the insecurity of militant feminists who constantly write about it. One wonders, in passing, if mocking reference to T-shirts & red suspenders in a magazine is akin to Toronto newspapers ridiculing Stephen Harper for wearing a cowboy hat at the Calgary Stampede and whether both those mindless slurs qualify as covert male abuse.

As to the issue of constitutional property rights in Canada, OPERA is far removed from the socialistic left. However elegant the defensive arguments of that persuasion and no matter how adroitly extortion by statute is disguised as environmentally essential, transferring control of private assets to public use by government regulation without compensation, is like shearing sheep - its wise to stop when you get down to the skin.

Eighty five years ago Karl Marx declared “the theory of the Communists may be summed up in a single sentence: Abolition of private property” In 1976 the United Nations, that vast international bureaucracy now plotting global governance without the consent of the governed, issued a policy statement that opened with “ land ..... cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals. Private land ownership is also a principal instrument of accumulation & concentration of wealth and therefore *contributes to social injustice* (italics added)”. Just like Karl Marx and writers who espouse state control of private land might wish!

In 2004 the incumbent provincial regime published a 101 page Panel Report on the Role of Government that advocates closing down rural Ontario in a foreseeable time frame on grounds of its alleged unsustainability. Later that year the same administration seized control of almost 2 million acres of land, much of it privately owned. Labeled the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, this latest re-distribution of wealth is said to shower all manner of future benefits on the Greater Toronto Area but, in the process, inhibits use, title, mortgage worth & market value of private property that the Ontario government doesn't own and won't buy. Aside from being denied compensation and any appeal against Ministerial decrees on Toronto's newest horseshoe court, affected landowners, in a Lincoln paraphrase, were “little noted nor long remembered” in the Greenbelt land grab.

After its political implosion in the 1980s Russia resurrected land ownership rights and, in 2004, communist China adopted similar legislation. In Canada, Augusta Township is not the only municipality that's approved a landowner rights resolution & Ontario is not the only province where landowner coalitions have been created & regional landowner groups organized to protest lack of such rights in this country. Examples cited above demonstrate pervasive state prejudice against private property and free enterprise, a cornerstone principle of democratic society. Hence the right to own private real estate free of government harassment, “special interest” lobbyists and United Nations global control must be entrenched in Canada's Charter of Rights & Freedoms as promised long ago or, alternatively, properly recognized in provincial & territorial legislation.

Sneering contempt for rustic rhetoric loses its edge when thousands, perhaps millions, of Canadians would heartily subscribe to an LLA statement of fact that Winston Churchill himself might have invented and rabid boosters of the omnipotent state will always despise. To wit: “*in a democracy governments don't have rights; people have rights and governments have duties*”. Clearly, some freelance authors prefer the Karl Marx dialectics and seek as ever new & naïve recruits.

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