

Have you been following the Donald Trump saga? I am always interested in these things, as a perennial seeker of conspiracy theories. It's far more interesting to think that Mr Trump is bribing, threatening or otherwise influencing the good men and women of Aberdeenshire Council than that the councillors are convinced his plans are good for the area.

The Menie Liberation Front is a campaign group set up to oppose his plans for hotels, housing and the greatest golf course in the western world. You may have heard of them; they recently covered statues all over Scotland (admittedly mostly in the central belt to be honest) with cardboard Donald Trump heads. A funny and essentially harmless way to highlight their cause.

I heard the campaigners speak this week of the attempts to put compulsory purchase orders on their homes, and they used the language of the clearances. At first this seemed to me to be a wee bit over-dramatic, but after they lost their attempt to get the council to rule out any purchases, I heard one of the residents talk about the possibility of losing his home. He spoke of celebrating birthdays and other special events and how they don't know any more if this would be the last one they celebrated in their home. His voice broke as he talked of this, and it made what is happening to them a lot more real than any campaigning.

Compulsory purchase orders are not used often, and when they relate to somewhere like Nigg, it seems a reasonable sort of law. Where people own land or property and their use, or neglect of it, is not in the interests of the community, the law allows the authorities to take ownership of it, compensating the owner financially, and then putting it to a better use. I don't know the ins and outs of it all, but you can see the sense of it in Nigg. I just wish the whole process wouldn't take so long.

It's a whole different ball-game when we are talking, not about commercial interests, but about people's homes, gardens and communities. I am not so sure this is what was intended when the law was passed. Can you imagine if you were put out of your home, not because you were behind with

your payments or causing a nuisance, but just because you live somewhere with a good view? Imagine if someone more powerful than you fancied taking over your bit of land and the council colluded with them, using the law to force you from your home. To add insult to injury, you wouldn't be offered any council housing as compensation because there aint none any more.

Suddenly the allusion to the clearances doesn't seem so dramatic. Donald Trump is the son of a Lewis woman who 'returned' to the family home the day before the public inquiry into the plans for his housing estate. That was well over a year ago, and I haven't heard of any more visits since.

His family were not one of the many Americans with Scottish ancestry who were victims of the clearances, or indeed the continuing poverty which drove so many to migration. From what I understand, his mother had a holiday romance in New York and, as in all good fairy tales, returned to marry and live happily ever after. The family home in Lewis still stands, in fact is still home to Mr Trump's cousins. I wonder why he didn't just built hundreds of homes all over his family croft?

According to Mr Trump's own organisation, in an effort to persuade the reluctant natives, he has made some very generous offers, including free lifetime access to the facilities being built. There would be no shame in accepting this offer, and maybe some of those whose land he now owns did manage to get a good deal. Maybe they were planning on moving anyway or saw this as an opportunity to improve their housing and good luck to them.

But I find it refreshing that there are still some people holding out against his giant American money bulldozer. After being let down by their council and the Scottish Government, it would be a modern evil if their council were to support a bully like Donald Trump and treat their residents no better than the Duke of Sutherland did his tenants.