

In the article, *Chiefs Angry at Hardball Government Tactics*, Paul Barnsley writes of the difficulties that indigenous people in British Columbia have faced because of the government's hardball tactics. In particular, the British Columbia government attempted to nullify the land claims of the indigenous people. Despite a Supreme Court of Canada decision years earlier, the government was poised to revoke land claims. Among the complaints by the indigenous nations was that development on their lands had taken place without consent, which caused damage. The people were not compensated for the damage. The government initiated hardball tactics by using the limitations argument in defense, which said that the nations had to file writs with the court to maintain their claims. The leaders of the indigenous nations condemned this tactic as the prevention of justice. The leader of the Tsilhqot'in National Government went further by announcing that they would not recognize provincial licenses possessed by resource companies. Further, he mentioned that unauthorized access of Chilcotin lands would be considered trespassing and theft of property. Additional hardball tactics included indigenous fishermen being hassled for taxes by British Columbia. The government justified their pursuit of taxes by saying that fishing takes place in the waters and not on the reserve. To add to the injustices, the government attempted to collect back taxes against native fishermen. Many indigenous groups banded together to resist taxation and to protect their historic rights. Among their claims were that their people suffered and their rights and title were not respected. It was frustrating dealing with the government, because new politicians were elected to office and were not fully aware of the trouble that indigenous people had faced. Despite the differences among the many indigenous nations, they are common in their willingness to come together and defend their livelihood, traditions, and culture.

I find it very understandable that the indigenous nations in British Columbia are angry at the government for disrespecting their land rights. The same problems have happened in the United States and really in any country where native people have dealt with newcomers conquering lands on which they live. This problem is also reminiscent of the United States government using the imminent domain law to force people to move out of their homes so that their land can be used for something else. The use of imminent domain happened in Arlington, Texas, when Jerry Jones wanted to build the new Cowboys Stadium. People's homes were in the way, so the government forced them to move in order to give Jerry Jones his new stadium. The common problem is that powerful governments do not truly respect property rights even in free nations like Canada or the United States of America. Considering this problem, it could be argued that people are not truly free. People need land for their livelihood as much as they need their bodies to function in order to live. If governments can forcibly take land or trespass on land, they are more tyrannical than protective of individual rights. Since government is basically controlling people's livelihood, they could also extend that control to people's lives and their bodies. It means that rather than people owning their lives and their bodies, the government owns people. Instead of the government fearing people, the people fear government. If government controls people's lives and bodies, it can dictate what food people eat. The government has already outlawed smoking in many places. With government in control, it can determine what medication a person will receive rather than what their doctor prescribes. Many people seem to be happy with the government existing as a nanny state, as long as they get their benefits, retirement, and livelihood from the government. Welfare has allowed people to cling to the government for security rather than wanting freedom. The indigenous people of British Columbia would rather have freedom than the control imposed by government.

## References

Barnsley, P. (2004). Chiefs angry at hardball government tactics. *Windspeaker*, 21(11), 17-20.

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