

There's no pain when we throw people out of their homes. Is there?

"GETTING CLOSER ..."

Who in the City can contain their excitement over the new library? Who in the City still remembers the residents who once resided in the houses shown below - residents whose properties were confiscated, at a price determined by appraisals done for the non-government entity throwing them out of their houses?

The "Library Letter" arrived in local mail boxes just before Christmas.

"GETTING CLOSER ..." it veritably screamed. The picture at the right (even poorer quality in the Library piece) conveniently avoids the reality of the situation. There's no point in reminding voters what they agreed to do to those people who had made their homes in those houses. No need reminding voters that we deliberately - with ample time to decide differently - we deliberately voted in the majority to evict people from their homes so we could have their land.

It is apparent that even the library folks have some trepidations about showing voters just what is happening in the area.

The picture at the right conveniently pictures an undisturbed house on 23rd Street, with the "high-rise" building in the background. No destruction shown. Just a tranquil scene. The caption in the Letter purports that the picture, "... gives a hint of the work that's been done to the property already, including the removal of structures and the beginnings of a fence surrounding the construction area."

The pictures below were taken within days of each other by the Cheyenne Herald.

They don't present quite the same innocence. Houses which were recently homes to some who did not want to move but were forced to because that is the spot the library board chose for a new library (and only because some on the City governing body threatened to withhold support for inclusion on the Capital Facilities Tax ballot unless the library was built there), had paint on them much the same as vandals might have done.

Trees were removed and the houses which meant so much to so few a short while ago have been demolished. Where are those who were displaced?



At least one got her wish. She told others that she would rather die than move. She since has. At least one other who was alive when voters filled in the blank oval condemning their property has died.

Another one - one who did not want his house taken from him and who did not want to move against his wishes - told the Herald that his house should not be "condemned." He had put much work and much money into improving the house and its location was ideal for him and his wife.

To be told his house would be condemned - if he didn't agree to sell and move on - meant to him that he was being told that his house was not fit to live in. "Condemnation," to him, was not a legal process.

It was a description of the house he loved.

The mayor has said that the City has never thrown anyone out of their homes. That the City has never "taken" their homes.

The dozen or so people who used to live on Thomes Avenue and 23rd Street would beg to differ with the mayor.

One woman had found that the only area of Cheyenne where

she was allowed to live in the 1940's - the area no one else wanted at that time - had now become the property of choice in the new century. The property chosen by a nameless, faceless library board who didn't know her or her background.

Would it have mattered to them if they had known that the elderly Japanese-American lady had also been displaced from her property by order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt sixty years earlier? Had the library board, or Laramie County voters, known that she once before had her property confiscated by the country in which she was a native-born resident - would she have had to suffer the indignity for a second time? Probably.

The U.S. Supreme Court has opened the door for even greater and more unreasonable application of state's eminent domain laws. Unless states now take specific action to the contrary, or unless the U.S. Congress passes a law to punish states which allow the confiscation of private property for "economic development," others will be looking down the barrel of condemnation. For malls or offices.

This City has designated the area around the former UP depot as a "blighted area" and called the remodeling of the depot building economic development. Anything, by their definition, can be the same.



The corner of 22nd Street and Thomes Avenue, from the southwest.

Thomes Avenue, north of the City Building, before final demolition.