

## Saying sorry for withdrawing privileges

Feudal superior landlords to be reimbursed by their vassals for lost 'rights' The next phase of Scotland's land reform programme will allow 'feudal superiors' to demand compensation for lost 'rights' established as long as 800 years ago.

In the scheme, homeowners are set to shell out up to £450 compensation to their erstwhile feudal superiors, according to The Herald.

Until now some superiors have been able in some cases to act as private planning authorities, charging handsome fees to householders wanting to alter their properties.

But landlords argue that the new legislation takes away their lawful rights. The pay-off will have to come from ordinary householders and businesses.

However some are arguing that the 'rights' argument is specious. They see the issue differently. They argue that what is happening is only the long-overdue withdrawal of undue historical privilege. Some reformers argue that compensating some for the withdrawal of these privileges is actually a breach of the human rights of the rest of the community, which has to pay the bill.

While many see the paying of compensation as unjust, it is not the establishment's view. Professor Stewart Brymer of the Law Society believes it just makes good business sense. "Some people have compared this to wringing the last drop of income out of the feudal system" he says in The Herald. "But those feudal superiors who have actively managed their portfolio are entitled to compensation."

The same argument was made, successfully, for the public to pay compensation to the hard-done-by slave owner in the time of abolition. Reform is seldom won cheaply.