

Submission process unfair or just sour grapes?

Cameron Madgwick, for PEPANZ, complained that a two week period for public submissions on proposed amendments to the Crown Mineral Act is too short (Daily News 3 October 2018). But PEPANZ didn't complain about the far less democratic process that resulted in the EEZ Amendment Act 2013 and regulatory changes that excluded public input re exploratory drilling. In that case, the previous National government used a Supplementary Order Paper, thereby avoiding the select committee process and public submissions entirely. Similarly the 'Anadarko Amendment' to the Crown Minerals Act, prohibiting peaceful protest at sea, was pushed through parliament under urgency, again with no public input or proper legislative review. In those cases, amendments favoured the fossil fuel industry, and, surprise, surprise, no complaints from PEPANZ re loss of democracy. Indeed they, along with senior oil industry executives, had been dealing directly with the Ministers involved, Simon Bridges and Steven Joyce, in so-called 'secret meetings' for which no minutes are available. Bridges even initially denied contact, bringing accusations of him misleading parliament. A less sanguine observer could ask where the line is drawn between lobbying, collusion and corruption? Those amendments were abject failures of prudent governance, particularly given that they occurred only a few years after the disastrous 2010 Deepwater Horizon exploratory drilling catastrophe. In the present case, everyone has an equal opportunity to comment. PEPANZ's complaint sounds more like 'sour grapes' than reasoned argument, in light of the urgency of transitioning to clean, renewable energy, which we have in abundance.

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