

A Fool's Paradise

There are some serious questions to be raised concerning the reality behind Celtic's board of director's plans to move to Cambuslang. As ever, where Michael Kelly is involved, doubts have been cast on the use of public funds, issues of public safety and the wisdom of his leadership.

Last year Celtic's shareholders expressed their fears that the move to Cambuslang was "Hazardous in financial terms... and bedevilled with technical and planning difficulties." (Herald 28/3/92) Fergus McCann the Canadian millionaire who tried to raise £17m for the club, departed the scene saying that "the Cambuslang PR exercise consists of a house of cards to be financed by a fairy godmother... the present management has neither backing nor abilities let alone credibility."

McCann's insinuations that there was something funny going on were somewhat confirmed by the sudden appearance of a Manchester based company called Peel Holdings a few days after his statement. Peel Holdings maintained that they had talked to the SDA about Celtic's site back in 1989 and that they retained the option on it.

Two months later the GDA (who took over from the SDA in 1990) revealed that a "satisfactory solution had been found." They revealed nothing more because it was "a commercial deal and required a degree of secrecy." This is fairly typical of the GDA's unaccountable use of public funds (on 16/7/92 the Scotsman revealed that the government's national audit office had failed to approve Scottish Enterprise's accounts, Scottish Enterprise are the GDA's parent body).

The Evening Times later told us that £500,000 had been paid to Peel Holdings, despite the fact that the GDA could have had the land back for nothing. The Evening Times are calling for a public enquiry. If such a thing takes place we should ask first who Peel Holdings are. They are a subsidiary of Tokenhouse Investments who own 50% of the company, the British Steel pension fund owns 10.99% and JPM Nominees own 20%, their bankers include the Royal Bank of Scotland (who I think should have been quite aware of the deal considering that Mr Ian Clark Wood of the Royal Bank was also on the board of the SDA).

Investigation

Celtic's plans are in the hands of a consortium called Superstadia. At their press conference last November several figures came forward to talk, including Brian Vieton of the engineering consultancy Ove Arup (A London Times report 7/5/91 revealed that Ove Arup were part of another consortium who were first into Kuwait for the cut-up over the rebuilding contracts before, during and after the Gulf war). Ove Arup, according to Celtic's press release were involved in the development of the Tottenham Hotspur ground. Private Eye 23/10/92 reveals that a property company, Landhurst Leasing, were also involved in the Spurs project and that they are now the subject of an investigation by the Serious Fraud Office, for "a large number of bad and doubtful loans, phoney leases and off-the-books cash deals." Ring any bells anyone?

Further investigations on Landhurst on their development of non-league Wealdstone FC's ground (which resulted in the club going

welcome to our paradise...



into administration) have resulted in Scotland Yard's "largest ever mortgage fraud investigation."

One of Superstadia's directors, Jeffrey J Wallis is also a director of another Private Eye favourite, Amber Day Holdings. On the 27/7/92 they revealed the connections between 'London underworld figure, and Amber Day shareholder Tony Schneider' and the Amber Day boss Philip Green. Their background on Green shows him as previously running five other companies, all of which have become insolvent, liquidated or compulsarily wound up. Green has since departed Amber Day, with its shares plummeting to 30p and was given a clean bill of health and a one million pound pay off by his fellow directors, he has since been drawn into the Landhurst Serious Fraud Investigation.

Carve Up

Superstadia itself is 49% owned by Pall Mall plc, this time featured in Private Eye 25/9/92 as the 'vehicle' used by the Chelsfield Property Group who joined with P&O to buy Laing Properties (Chelsfield's shareholders include Hambro's Bank, a director of which includes Sir David Nickson soon to depart from Scottish Enterprise). The deal went wrong and "P&O facing its own problems, wanted to carve up Laing and offload the £340m debt burden it brought... shareholders were promised... the chance to get out 'as soon as practicable'." Pall Mall have been left in a bad way with losses of £48.6 m and about half of its properties now used to pay off the interest on a £160m loan used to facilitate the whole deal. One of Chelsfield's directors has gone on to be the advisor in proposed developments of Chelsea and Fulham's grounds.

But, amidst all the concerns regarding site ownership, effect on small traders and finance for Celtic and Superstadia's project the main issue is and remains the awful pollution suffered not only by the site itself but by the whole Cambuslang, Carmyle and Rutherglen area. A history of wilful dumping covering 150 years; dumping of waste, most notably by Whites Chemicals and the steel industry plus, working on the maxim that the only place to dump poison is on top of poison, fly tipping by, by its very nature, who knows who.

The result is an area that exhibits leukemia rates akin to places like Dounrae and Sellafield, where chromium waste leaches around tarmac

covered car parks, where local football clubs terracings' glow in the dark.

Celtic and Superstadia wish to build there. They have submitted a planning application and were taken aback when the Planning Authorities sent it back, saying that it was lacking. They re-submitted. It, despite all Celtic and Superstadia's claims that it the most detailed planning statement since the universe was built, is still lacking.

They admit that they don't know where the stadium will be sited. They admit that they don't know what other buildings will grace the stinking site nor their purpose. This despite an assurance to local traders that they are not planning a Parkhead Forge, a development that has knocked the street life out of a community.

This, of course, should not surprise. Since locals and various 'unofficial' publications started screaming that the area is a toxic timebomb Michael Kelly and his PR Associates moved quickly and arrogantly to dismiss the claims, even going so far as to publicly demand an apology from the likes of local pressure group Cambuslang, Carmyle and Rutherglen Against Pollution (CCRAP).

Problems

However, Kelly has been noticeably silent since the 20th January, following a public meeting where Superstadia's 'experts' admitted that there are vast problems with the old mine workings and the lethal waste that has been pumped into them, even going so far as to request information from the public!

Is it not strange that Kelly, a previous Lord Provost and thus party to all information from all Glasgow local government committees should claim that there is no problem with the site? That there is no pollution? Would this not suggest that he is one of two things- incompetent or corrupt?

And what are we to make of the Celtic Board and Superstadia's assurances that they wish to be 'good neighbours with the people of Cambuslang, that they will clean adjacent sites of litter following any event at their super stadium? If this is so, then why do they not practice this at Parkhead? Why do community and tenants groups find it necessary to protest to the the Celtic Board over the disruption to their lives, the litter and the nuisance that comes from living next to a club run by that very Board? Why do they receive 'go away' letters from the Board if they dare protest? How difficult must it be living in the knowledge that to protest could mean being branded as anti-Celtic when quite patently they are either not or have no strong feelings one way or the other?

Celtic's main reason for having to redevelop Parkhead or find a new ground comes about following the recommendations of the Taylor Report following the Hillborough Disaster. These recommendations have been made in the interests of Public Safety. How on the spoilt earth could building at Cambuslang and unleashing the toxic threat that that site holds be in the interests of public safety?

The problems affecting Cambuslang, Carmyle and Rutherglen must be dealt with. If the whole Celtic/Superstadia deal falls through the must not be allowed to be forgotten.

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TIME FOR A CHANGE

It is not just Monklands Distict Council that has been exposed as blatantly corrupt. Every Labour group leader in any District or Regional Council where Labour has an overall majority, runs things in the same sleazy way.

Council meetings are pretend democracy, the decision making process is a farcical public relations exercise, as is Labour opposition to the Tories' brutal treatment of the people. Token statements that Local Authorities oppose water privatisation are clearly seen as hypocritical, with their secret instructions to stop local communities organising for themselves by banning them from 'public' buildings & halls.

Strathclyde Region have already been caught out buying water shares & meeting

with prospective developers. These deceptions and wilful ignorance of the people's wishes to go all the way up to national level, but mass opposition exists, as we have seen in Edinburgh and London. It rejects not only the Tories and their crooked policies, but demonstrates that the House of Commons has become a fundamental obstacle to social justice.

As soon as it was pointed out that the only way forward for Scotland to be taken seriously in its fight for independence, was for all MPs who had been elected as supporters of home rule to resign their seats, turn their backs on the Unionist House of Commons, forgo their parliamentary expenses and set up shop in Edinburgh, that was the end of

any serious attempt to take the fight any further.

We are told as usual we have to wait another five years till the next election. Its always tomorrow for the people.

January 1993 was the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Independent Labour Party, so it's 105 years we've been waiting. All we've got for our patience is a mafia-like network and its systematic abuse of power. That patience has run out.

Just as their sinister activities are so widespread and local, they come within their grasp. Labour's leaders are afraid of their own roots and membership: its time to expose it, to speak up and break up the corruption.



