

and dedicated community organisations suggest that remembrance of the past will be vigorously contested from below. And that makes me hopeful for the future too. ■

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Aquatics Centre for 2012 Olympic Games or the world through margarine?

▶ **W**inter ends suddenly in the city. The air changes somehow, taking on that expansiveness born of all things relaxing a little, out of the grip of the cold and freshly lost in that, '[D]runkness of things being various'. The avenues soften in a blur of foliage-filtered sunshine, warm and buttery over the layered pavement. Pollacks left by generations of stumped pigeons. Peonies come out on Hampstead Heath, just like George Michael, every time he has to hawk a new album to the middle management demographic of this world.

Yes, change is afoot, and in Westminster it is on the hoof. At time of writing and according to Blair's carefully chosen, constitutionally appropriate media outlet, GMTV, the deadline for Blair to leave was May 10th, after his last Stormont photo-op with Ian the Fedora and Gerry the Lecturer. It is as sure a thing as you get in politics that Brown shall become beloved leader. David Milliband is refusing to run, it is reported, and while a reluctant candidate is a dangerous factor in such matters, he probably shall stick to his word – at least for now. His tide is not yet at the flood, plus his Mum wants him to finish his 'O' Levels first.

People in the capital are generally indifferent now, as ever, to the succession issue. When the ground moves quickly beneath your feet you have to watch the tarmacadam for fissures; you don't have the luxury of reflective time. Additionally, one cannot be easily heard above the clamour, so most people don't bother trying to offer an opinion. The only issue about which Londoners seem to become animated is the Olympics, which *grand projet* is going to benefit only property people and cost the council tax-payer [as well as arts organisations] a Very Large Amount of Money Indeed.

Cian O'Neill  
a view from London

## Everting gonna' be a' bootiful

To peruse the webdomain of the 2012 Games is to see the world through margarine. There is nothing wrong, Everything is fine. Go back to work. The language used mirrors perfectly the insular parable of New Labour, too far [ten years] down the line to care about accountability, where one seeks detail one finds the perspicacity of the brochure. While the broadsheets have only in the past few weeks alluded to the crisis facing Lottery-dependent arts organisations [and those winds will blow chill through the North too, notwithstanding the continuing flow of peace dividend Euros from Brussels to local 'cultural' interests], Private Eye has to its credit been systematically turtle-flipping the administration's figures submitted regarding the costs of the 2012 Olympics for some time. Remember VAT? Could H.M. Government, the very organisation which administers this tax, really forget VAT when estimating the costs?

Tessa Jowell, a woman whose grasp of financial probity does not extend to her having taken any interest when her now ex-husband handled alleged 'shush money' for Silvio Berlusconi [he who makes the average T.D. look like a paragon of virtue], has promised that the money grabbed from arts-funding for the Games will be 'repaid'. Once, that is, the athletes go home. Until then the arts must wait their turn and eat cake; or, perhaps, an Official Games 'energy bar'. A case of, "Ehhh, trust me, alrite"? Everting gonna' be a' bootiful, I promis"

It is Tony's last folly. As he came in with the Dome, he leaves us with another Docklands regeneration boon

for property developers and satirists. The games shall serve also to increase ever further the desirability of London as short city-break destination of choice for those activated as Jihadis by this Labour administration's jaunts into the desert and rocks of other peoples' countries [- that being Tony's legacy proper, as 69% of people in an Independent newspaper survey published 1/5/7 had it]. Whether Gordon will be there to bask, like the unusually saturnine walrus-of-the-manse he is, in the glory of the Games is another question. You have this writer's word, incidentally, that he shall never cite the Independent again, but the dog ate my homework, you know.

Spare a thought, then, for the poor East Londoners who shall endure seeming acorns of building works and photo opportunites with Sebastian Coe, he who does for smugness what Croesus did for 'bling'. Picture it: Seb snapped while 'joyously' outrunning a hoodie' wielding a shottie'. The PR crew will roll out all the rousing personalities of the age – Kelly Holmes, Fatima Whitbread, that bald swimmer with the Munster-ish rolling-dice eyes named 'Duncan'. Come the actual event, the Americans will lead the opening parade of nations in armoured Humvees, followed by the Israelis who shall carry pole-vaults topped with the heads of Palestinian children. The Irish, taking up the rear, will look pale and bashful and probably won't beat Pakistan at the cricket competition. Well, anyhow, you get the picture. Plus ça change – mine's a highball. ■

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