

## *Olympics Farewell and Hail!*

### Circuses and Bread (in that order)

A minor scandal was caused at the party after the Olympic Games, at which London was celebrating its status as the next Olympic city. A continuous loop—the inevitable backdrop to speeches, songs etc., now that nobody can be expected just to attend to what is being said—included an exhibit said to be from Tate Modern and depicting, in the medium of hand-prints, the late Myra Hindley. Well, Tate Modern is part of the spirit of contemporary London, and Myra Hindley part of the British myth, so where was the scandal?

Were the officially approved expressions of British culture any better?

“David Beckham, pop icon Leona Lewis and rock star Jimmy Page led London’s eight-minute slot in the closing ceremony as the Beijing Olympics began as they finished, in a fusion of colour, light, fireworks, music, dance and technology.

“After the national anthem sung by the National Youth Theatre, and the official handover, London’s chance to impress the world began.

“Where Beijing relied on vast numbers of participants, London used fame and popular culture.”

—as the *Mirror* reported.<sup>1</sup>

You can hear a snatch of Leona Lewis’s single, *Bleeding Love*, on her website. Truly a symptom of how modern Britain impresses the world: stupid and ugly! Genuine music would not have represented the old country as she wishes to be seen. “Gordon Brown last night promised the greatest rock concert the world has ever seen for the opening ceremony of London 2012. ‘Music and the cultural aspects of the Games will be very important as we move forward to 2012,’” said the Prime Minister. “In all these areas, where our creativity is leading the world, I think we will want to showcase that to the world when they look in on London in 2012.”<sup>2</sup> This may be expected to push Mr Brown up a point or two in the opinion polls.

Mr Brown, though not a competitor, was of course trying to get some electoral benefit from the country’s surprising success in the Olympics. He took the credit for funding and observed that we “need to put more money in if we want to get more medals out.”<sup>3</sup> From a Prime Minister this surely amounts to a promise, at least as regards the more money in. Is the kind of success that can be straightforwardly related as effect to funding as cause an example of public good?<sup>4</sup> And what if other nations follow suit?—making a sort of games-race, which after all is probably better than an arms race? But if this happens Mr Brown should bear in mind that in some other nations more money is available.

Sport should not be subsidised out of the taxes. It is not a proper use of public money to pay for games. Mr Brown’s government has no money to spare in any case. What money there is should go on national necessities like pensions, the health services, proper equipment for the armed forces, a reliable power supply and gas storage system, reducing the national debt. Wealthy individuals who wish to foster games and sports can and do so. Games are not an affair of state, except a state going more and more the way of the Roman Empire. The pop music of Rome has not survived, but the emperors would have heartily sympathised with Mr Brown’s promise of the greatest rock concert the world has ever seen. Bread and circuses. But what has become of Prudence?

A party that put in its manifesto a promise to cancel the 2012 Olympics would be worth voting for.

[Throughout the second week of the Olympics the news was that “Team GB” would come third in the medals tally. In the event third was Russia.]

To return to Home Page click [www.edgewaysbooks.com](http://www.edgewaysbooks.com)

1 [Mirror.co.uk](http://Mirror.co.uk) 24 August 2008    2 *Ibid.*

3 SBS World News 24 August 2008. A glance at the Web revealed the same moral learned by both Australia (disgruntled at coming only sixth) and New Zealand.

4 In one sport we had never heard of, in which the object is to kick your opponent’s head while avoiding getting your own head kicked, a British lady was unfairly not declared the winner after she had kicked the head of a Chinese lady in the last few seconds of the contest, but justice prevailed after a protest. (One competitor in the men’s version, also disgruntled by what he thought an unjust verdict, took the age-old revenge of attacking the referee, by kicking his head.) Would the public good have been enhanced if, thanks to additional public money, our competitor had kicked her opponent’s head harder and more often?