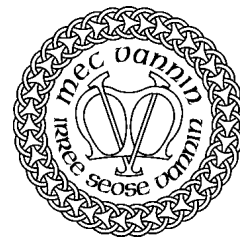


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SEFTON DEBACLE - SHIMMIN'S RESIGNATION SOLVES NOTHING

Mr. John Shimmin has taken the fall for the Sefton Group "bail-out" but Chief Minister Alan Bell was instrumental in setting the whole deal up.

Indeed, answers given to questions about the the history of the deal, both by former Chief Minister, now Sefton Chairman, Miles Walker, and current Chief Minister, former Economic Development Minister and former Treasury Minister, Alan Bell, leave little

doubt that informal approaches had been made by the Sefton Group to Alan Bell well before the first official meeting in November 2011.

Little imagination is required to speculate that there had been significant off-the-record dealings with Mr Bell in the months previous, and it may well be that the parties involved were waiting for the departure of Chief Minister Tony Brown, who may not as been as "conducive" to the notion.

The loans (and the parties are not totally transparent on the amount borrowed) are a minimum £1.7million, but were more realistically approaching £5 million prior to the outright acquisition of the "Middlemarch" site in central Douglas

These were arranged under The Enterprise Act, yet another "if your face fits" scheme to allow Taxpayer money to be diverted towards those who found favour with those involved in approving the loans.

TAX CAPPING - AN ANTI-SOCIAL AND UNJUSTIFIED SYSTEM THAT LEAVES THE POOR WITH THE GREATEST BURDEN

Back in the "good old days" of 2006/7 when Mr Bell was Treasury Minister and everything in the garden seemed rosy, he persuaded Tynwald to introduce the tax-capping policy for the super-rich. This was at a time when the Manx Government was using our inflated VAT income to subsidise a policy of low, direct taxation. Mec Vannin was vocal in its opposition to the principle and also warned very specifically against reliance upon indirect taxation (VAT) over which we have no control. We can be certain it is not a policy they would have the temerity to introduce now.

The Treasury tells us there are about 70 individuals / couples who benefit from tax-capping which oddly is the same number as already lived on the Island when it was introduced six or seven years ago and who immediately gained! Let's be honest, the super-rich have always come to the Island in the past, attracted by low tax rates, no capital gains tax and no death duties. There was never any need or

justification for capping their income tax as well. There is no evidence at all that anybody came here just for the tax cap, there cannot be, because any information is surely confidential between the person involved and the Assessor of Income Tax.

It should be possible to put a figure on what tax we lost when tax capping was brought in but the Treasury is very cagey about answering that question. Despite their best "spin", the Government cannot say whether any of these people would leave if the cap was removed. Neither should we discount a future UK Government objecting to "Manx resident" multi-millionaires controlling and operating their businesses in the UK by commuting in their private jets and helicopters. Perhaps someone like Richard Murphy (ethical tax exponent) could point out to an incoming UK Labour Government, the hypocrisy of a Crown Dependency seemingly wanting to be British in all respects **except taxation.**

It is unlikely that, when Tynwald approved the Act, most members ever envisaged that it would be used as a bail-out mechanism for the old boys network.

Miles Walker has announced, just last week, that the Sefton Group has made a £10 million profit. The economy has not significantly changed. The business has not changed. The only significant change is the departure of the now bankrupt Graham Ferguson-Lacey, a man who came to this country with a huge warning label attached but, just as with Judah Binstock, key members of government and former government couldn't get enough of him.

If we want to see a reason for the Sefton's economic difficulties, look no further than that man and the Board of Director's failure to exercise their legal duty to exercise control over his mismanagement.

Mr Bell = Mount Murray = Corruption of Government. Mr. Shimmin's departure is an unconvincing attempt to make this mess go away. How many other mismanaged businesses have benefited from the Enterprise Act because "their faces fit"? How many viable enterprises have been turned down because their faces "didn't fit"?

Chief Minister's arrogance and blame-shifting attitude

It is surely past time that the Chief Minister Allan Bell showed a little humility and shouldered some responsibility for the financial state the Island now finds itself in. His comments as reported in the Examiner of the 27th January on the widespread opposition to the £50 sewage charge that, and we quote :

"We have got to re-balance government finances. How quickly people forget the starting point of all this - we have lost a third of our income"

What complete arrogance. Mr Bell seems to be implying that the public is stupid.

The public has not forgotten. It has not forgotten that Mr Bell has been an MHK for 30 years or so and it has not forgotten that Mr Bell has held most of the senior ministerial positions including the Treasury during that time. Mr Allan Bell bears as much responsibility as any politician for the pursuit of a financial policy that resulted in an unsustainable and as it transpired, unreal proportion of our income coming from VAT, an indirect tax set and effectively controlled from another jurisdiction ie the UK, but which he thought was a source of never-ending wealth. It was Bell who then used that VAT bonanza to pursue a policy of low direct taxation (personal and business) in order to , as he saw it, "maintain our competitiveness" as a Tax Haven.

The Chief Minister is very fond of absolving himself of any blame by referring to the 2008 worldwide banking and financial crisis as the time when everything changed. Isn't that the same excuse used by the last Labour Government under Gordon Brown to excuse *its* financial mismanagement?

Any chance of a public apology Mr. Bell?

MANX RADIO – FIFTY YEARS AND NOTHING TO CELEBRATE

Manx Radio is 50 years old this year and has tried recently, without much success, to make the occasion memorable.

The radio station's one claim to fame would seem to be that it was, by chance, the first commercial radio station in the British Isles. However, 'commercial' it has never been, requiring a hefty subsidy from government to underwrite its operation.

Given the clam-like fiscal control government exercises over the station it has never been noted for courageous journalism and always tended to play safe rather than play fair in its role to notify the Manx public.

The station has never been particularly prominent (despite the 'Manx' bit in its name) in promoting a nationalist agenda (note the small 'n').

When it comes to political Nationalism as espoused by Mec Vannin and some other (now defunct) nationalist bodies the station positively revels in reporting only those issues which it believes cast Manx Nationalism in a negative light.

However, enough of this introspection, it is not just Nationalists who have felt let down by the station over the years.

Through the sixties, seventies and eighties, as the Island's government remained wedded to policies which showed scant regard for civil liberties, equality and disregard for social justice, Manx Radio was always there as a conduit for the government's bigotry. The station seldom, if ever, set the agenda, content to be more of a 'tame dog' at the feet of government.

This is not a personal view - check the record of (what was then) a thriving print media and you have to agree that the any articulation of a need for social change came via that print media and not the 'national' radio station.

Even its public – the life blood of any good media outlet – were let down.

God knows I personally found it a pain, but the one programme the Manx public seemed to love was the Mannin Line (known almost affectionately as the Moan-in Line).

However there were people (other than me) that found it irksome and they (the Manx government) got their way and it was consigned to the dustbin of Manx broadcasting - a once weekly slot on Sundays!

Fifty years and nothing to celebrate! It could have been so different. In the United Kingdom, for all its warts and blemishes, the BBC is affectionately known as 'Auntie'.

In contrast in the Isle of Man the 'Nations Station' has spent fifty years turning itself into an 'Aunt Sally'.

Mind you, it has good listening figures - so that's alright then!

Bernard Moffatt

Editorial note

Mec Vannin tried on several occasions to get the station's then management to acknowledge its own failures, over format, style and even certain technical issues.

It wasn't until an English consultancy firm was engaged at a cost of £400,000 to review and make recommendations on the station's future that any progress was made. Mec Vannin met with the consultants and put the case for a National station, against a backdrop of deregulation and commercial stations aimed at a young audience. Their final report read like Mec Vannin's own previous submissions on the issue.

*Ultimately, the station's own 50th anniversary promotional video clip, available on Youtube, gives it away when Judith Lay says "We are the oldest independent **local** radio station in the British Isles....". There you have a true Freudian slip.*

More Sefton Sagas

The judgement of the Employment Tribunal in the case of Stephen Robert Harding v The Sefton Group plc is interesting.

Held in 2012 the case did not involve the current Island's Attorney General Stephen Mark Harding (still on suspension despite being cleared of charges of falsifying documents) but there is an Attorney General link nonetheless, as the Respondent (The Sefton Group) was represented by John Quinn, currently Acting Attorney General during Mr. Harding's suspension.

The word "unreliable" appears on several occasions during the Tribunal's deliberations and specifically in paragraph 107 the evidence of our current Acting Attorney General and a colleague is described in the same terms.

Crucial to the case and the Tribunal's finding against the Sefton Group is a UK forensic laboratory's findings that a key document had been tampered with by persons unknown.

Anyone who finds the mind-numbing pap broadcast by UK television too much to bear can read the report instead at:

<http://www.gov.im/lib/docs/registries/tribunal/et1197.pdf>

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Closure of State pre-schools a disaster, both educationally and economically

It was a mess from the outset. When the Department of Education pulled the plug on pre-school education in 2012, the pre-schools were handed over to private enterprise under the auspices of the Department of Social Care or whatever it's called at the moment.

This department is unqualified and uninterested in requiring anyone under its pre-school acquisitions to actually educate. The only requirement is that the nursery / playgroup or whatever you want to call it has a manager with a "Level 3" qualification in child-care, whatever that is. This is not a requirement of the Children and Young Persons Act, which covers this. It's just something that someone in the department has decided someone should have. No specification as to what issuing bodies are recognised are given and so we must assume that any of the many "Level 3" qualifications available, from the £300 off-the-internet to the over £3,000 ones issued by the Isle of Man College are suitable.

At the outset, it was announced that a £350 voucher was available for anyone sending a child to a "pre-school". As it

is impossible to differentiate between a "pre-school" and any other type of playgroup under the new regime, this quickly extended to any child being sent to a child care facility, and an enhanced additional £800 to those on benefits.

According to the government's own figures, this equates to an expenditure of some £500,000 per annum. The pre-schools were closed to save the department an estimated £500,000 per annum.

So these "pre-schools" are not required to comply with any form of educational standards, are not required to have anyone with any teaching qualification or teaching experience involved and the opportunity for the professional reporting of concerns over educational and behavioural development to the schools proper have been largely lost.

As we approach the start of a new school year this September, it seem that only two of those facilities advertising themselves as "Pre-Schools" will actually have a qualified teacher involved.

Mec Vannin Membership / Information Request

I wish to join Mec Vannin as a full / associate / family / unwaged member.
I enclose a cheque / PO for £10 / £5 / £15 / £5 (See over)

Print name.....

Address.....

.....

Telephone

Email

I have read and support the policies and agree to be bound by the constitution of Mec Vannin. I agree to having my details stored for communication purposes in keeping with the relevant sections of the Isle of Man Data Protection Act while a member. I am not a member of another political party (does not apply to associate members).

Signed Date

Registration of political parties - Looking the wrong way through a telescope

Mec Vannin has no fundamental objection to the registration of political parties. There is a real concern, however, that it will be used as a tool to frustrate the formation of legitimate opposition to the monolithic beast that is the Council of Ministers.

This could take the form of an expensive registration system, accounting regime etc. It's something of a contradiction that, when according to Mr. Bell, people don't want parties, his government is taking steps to frustrate their creation. Surely there's no need?

The real reason for the proposals is the fall-out from the Kevin Woodford / "Buster" Lewin fiasco, when a "blind trust" was established to try to "pack" Tynwald with stooges.

When a candidate stands for a party, they are being clear about whose interests and policies they will pursue and the public can scrutinise those policies. Furthermore, the party itself can scrutinise a candidate's behaviour and call them to account on a real-time basis. The real problem, the problem

that has existed in very real terms for as long as the House of Keys has been popularly elected, is that no-one except the candidate knows who the independents actually represent. They invariably promise to do "the right thing at the right time" whatever the hell that might be.

All too often, that means looking after their own business interests first, and then their "associates".

How many "independent" politicians, both at local and national level, now and in the past, have properties abroad on the strength of "services rendered"?

The proposals may well stifle legitimate parties who are largely open in their objectives, while the real problem, individuals with no accountability are free to prosecute their own and their "friends" interest next.

Remember that the Tynwald Members' register of interests is purely voluntary and "smoothing things for property developers" does not appear against any name.

Vision 2020? Not a chance!

We are not aware of a single Manx politician who has voiced an understanding of the immense changes that could take place in the next few years within the United Kingdom as a consequence of the Scottish referendum, whatever the outcome, "Yes" or "No". The impact on the Isle of Man could be very significant indeed but our politicians studiously ignore the subject.

Our Government is too busy acting as the political wing of the business community these days, or at least the "glamorous" part of the business world, which allows them to travel the world at our expense and delude themselves and the senior Civil Servants who accompany them that they are "high powered".

They can produce a fatuous document called "Vision 20/20" whilst allowing themselves to be blinded by the dazzling wealth of the super-rich. We expect our politicians to have foresight, a quality singularly lacking in our current Council of Ministers whose collective motto should perhaps be , "with the benefit of hindsight".

Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam.....

If you can't connect that title with the phrase "Bloody Vikings", look it up on the internet.

Yes, the name "Tynwald" is from Norse but the outdoor assemblies were a feature of Celtic society well before the Norse appeared in the 9thC. The Norse also disappeared in the 13thC, and we carried on being Celts. Nonetheless, some bunch just can't help dressing up as Hollywood Vikings and running around the place.

Said bunch decided to light fires on hilltops at midnight on summer solstice. There is no record of this in Norse or Celtic tradition. A thick mist clamped down on them as twilight descended and stayed there. Maybe a certain CELTIC god was making a statement: MANNANIN'S MIST!

Mec Vannin Membership

Membership of Mec Vannin is open to all who support the aims and objectives of the party which are:

To achieve national independence for Mann as a sovereign state, based on a republican form of government. To further and safeguard the interests of Mann. To protect the individual and collective rights of its people.

More information can be found at our website (see page 3).

Full membership is open to Manx residents age 18 and over and associate membership is open to all others who wish to support the party.

Rates are: £10pa (full) or £15pa for a couple living together. Associate and unwaged rate is £5pa.

The Party has the right to decline membership without stating a reason.