

Gold, Silver, Bronze, In Fair Competition

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald and Littlehampton Gazette Article

29th July 2021

The investigation report of the IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse about children in the care of Lambeth Council shows how the vulnerable were betrayed.

Specific issues prompted me to act in Worthing alongside then Councillor Tom Wye and Tim Loughton MP. One was a household of older refugee teenagers placed together in a house with little oversight or care. They did not know how to care for their home and failed to realise that elderly neighbours needed the shared drain to remain unblocked. Their noise or music should not disturb people after 10pm.

We were concerned by use of small unregistered children's homes that appeared to be without regulation. Children in the care of a London Borough could be placed on the south coast without the local council, police or social services being notified.

A ludicrously extended and expensive inquiry was started, in my view totally without justification, into Tom Wye's speaking clearly about the failure to provide safely for the welfare of vulnerable children. Eventually and predictably, it cleared him.

All the children concerned should have had the opportunity for happy, satisfactory childhood development with consistent, constant parenting, even when in effect 'children of the state'. They needed care and control, like all children. They needed access to worthwhile activities, games and sports.

Children deserve the chance to aspire to become potential Olympians. See medal holders on the podium. How many others are denied the chance to enjoy sports or games, even if like me they would not reach county standard? Until joining a few Parliament teams, the heights of my achievement were places in four university minor sports teams, including modern pentathlon and water-polo.

When first serving as MP in inner London, I saw evidence of an earlier conclusion: "managerial freedom was devalued by political decision-makers . . . including too close a relationship between them and the trade unions."

IICSA reports: "A number of witnesses considered that trade unions had too great a grip on Lambeth Council staff and councillors. Lord Ouseley considered there to have been close relationships between several councillors, different trade unions and trade union leaders. Many of those councillors projected themselves as representing the interests of the staff or believed that they had an affinity with the lower ranks of employees. This resulted in suspicion and a lack of trust between officers and councillors."

Those entrusted with positions of influence and independence have the responsibility to be active for the weak and vulnerable, even if we might suffer personally. It is what we expect police and other emergency staff to do; it is the experience of many clinical staff in hospitals; it is the duty of those in military service.

Turn to the Olympic Games. For fun and inspiration, remember the Shropshire Wenlock Agricultural Reading Society resolution in February 1850 to establish The Olympian Class. The good Dr William Penny Brookes helped the first meeting held at the Much Wenlock's race course in October. Cycling was on penny farthings. One event was the blindfolded wheelbarrow race. In 1890 Baron de Coubertin visited, to be inspired to create the International Olympic Committee IOC.

The BBC would like to broadcast live streams of nearly everything – 'never miss a moment' as they achieved at London and Rio. The problem follows the IOC decision to give the pan-European Olympic rights to Discovery. Free-to-air broadcasters had to make sub-licence deals with Discovery.

I question the judgment of the IOC and the avarice of Discovery. Never make these mistakes again. National moments have a profound cultural and social impact.