

## **Cleverly Ignoring the Forest for a Tree of Hypocrisy**

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, July 06, 2005

<https://politicsrespun.org/2005/07/cleverly-ignoring-the-forest-for-a-tree-of-hypocrisy/>

Mark Steyn's petty critique of Live8 in [What rocks is capitalism... yeah, yeah, yeah](#) [see below] is a cynical attempt to blow smoke up a legitimate action because a bunch of rich, selfish celebrities are involved: just the kind of people, by the way, to get hundreds of millions of folks watching a bunch of commercials with fingers snapping every 3 seconds to highlight the gong show we've made out of developing countries.

Sure these celebrities are rich and likely won't carve out heaps of their own cash to fix Africa, but in Steyn's effort to make it all look like a hypocritical scam, he creates a straw man out of the whole point of Live8. Live8 goals can be found here if Steyn cared to look at their whole approach:

<http://www.live8live.com/whatsitabout/index.shtml>

It's not to toss aid to African nations, however corrupt they may/will be in the future. It's about more and better aid which focuses on community development involving citizens, not corrupt leaders sucking on the CIA tit of suitcases full of cash and US Marine bases.

It's about eliminating the debt of not just the poorest countries [the HIPC's: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries], but countries that have paid off the principal many times over through interest rates, principal incurred by criminal, kleptocratic leaders: odious debt.

But most importantly, it's about trade justice. The lie that is free trade currently allows the EU and USA to protect domestic textile and agricultural producers against foreign imports when those industries are the best hopes for developing countries partaking in the global capitalist marketplace. Such lies are unbearable.

Ironically, it's this hypocrisy that Steyn captures when he lambastes Linda McCartney's shrewd use of jurisdictional dancing to avoid "fair" tax payments. That's the same hypocrisy that kills millions a year through trade injustice. This is why the developing countries are stalling WTO talks: because they know developed countries' definition of fair trade is a lie.

The truth ultimately, though, despite Steyn's bitterness at the rich celebrities, is that it is not the job of the rich to fix global trade injustice and exploitation leading to a child dying every 3 seconds. It's citizens' job in democratic countries to force their leaders to stop the system from killing people. Cheques from Dave Gilmour and Madonna won't fix anything and Steyn is off-base hinting that as capitalists, celebrities have no right to speak when it's citizens of capitalist countries that gain from the death and exploitation of the poor.

Even my local Liberal MP got into the act of justifying virtual inaction when he responded to my Live8 email to Paul Martin with a rationalization that we're doing so much, when in reality we're helping with one hand and slapping with the other:

"When Prime Minister Martin was Finance Minister, he led an initiative at the G20 to establish a program to relieve the most indebted nations. As a result, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative was created. The HIPC is a comprehensive international debt reduction strategy, to help the poorest nations of the world reduce their external debt burdens. Canada was the first creditor country to call for forgiveness of all bilateral debt owed by countries eligible for the HIPC program. The HIPC is used as a complimentary program to the Canadian Debt Initiative which was introduced in March 1999; our Government recognized the grave implications of unsustainable debt levels of HIPC countries. You may wish to read more information about the HIPC at [http://www.fin.gc.ca/toce/2005/cdre0105\\_e.html](http://www.fin.gc.ca/toce/2005/cdre0105_e.html) "

Shame on us and shame on Mark Steyn.

*What rocks is capitalism... yeah, yeah, yeah*

By Mark Steyn

(Filed: 05/07/2005)

"To sneer at such events," cautioned The Sunday Telegraph apropos Live8, "demeans the generosity which they embody".

Oh, dear. If you can't sneer at rock stars in the Telegraph, where can you? None the less, if not exactly a full-blown sneer, I did feel a faint early Sir Cliff-like curl of the lip coming on during the opening moments of Saturday's festivities, when Sir Paul McCartney stepped onstage.

Not because Sir Paul was any better or worse than Sir Elton or Sir Bob or any other member of the aristorockracy, but because it reminded me of why I'm sceptical about the "generosity" which these events "embody".

Seven years ago, you'll recall, Sir Paul's wife died of cancer. Linda McCartney had been a resident of the United Kingdom for three decades but her Manhattan tax lawyers, Winthrop Stimson Putnam & Roberts, devoted considerable energy in her final months to establishing her right to have her estate probated in New York state.

That way she could set up a "qualified domestic marital trust" that would... Yeah, yeah, yeah, in the immortal words of Lennon and/or McCartney. Big deal, you say. We're into world peace and saving the planet and feeding Africa. What difference does it make which jurisdiction some squaresville suit files the boring paperwork in?

Okay, I'll cut to the chase. By filing for probate in New York rather than the United Kingdom, Linda McCartney avoided the 40 per cent death duties levied by Her Majesty's Government. That way, her family gets all 100 per cent - and 100 per cent of Linda McCartney's estate isn't to be sneezed at.

For purposes of comparison, Bob Geldof's original Live Aid concert in 1985 raised £50 million. Lady McCartney's estate was estimated at around £150 million. In other words, had she paid her 40 per cent death duties, the British Treasury would have raised more money than Sir Bob did with Bananarama and all the gang at Wembley Stadium that day.

Given that she'd enjoyed all the blessings of life in these islands since 1968, Gordon Brown might have felt justified in reprising Sir Bob's heartfelt catchphrase at Wembley: "Give us yer fokkin' money!" But she didn't. She kept it for herself. And good for her. I only wish I could afford her lawyers.

I don't presume to know what was in her mind, but perhaps she figured that for the causes she cared about - vegetarianism, animal rights, the usual stuff - her money would do more good if it stayed in private hands rather than getting tossed down the great sucking maw of the Treasury where an extra 60 million quid makes barely a ripple.

And, while one might query whether Sir Paul (with his own fortune of £500 million) or young Stella really need an extra 15 million or so apiece, in the end Linda McCartney made a wise decision in concluding that her estate would do more good kept out of Mr Brown's hands, or even re-routed to Africa, where it might just about have defrayed the costs of the deflowering ceremony for the King of Swaziland's latest wife.

And that's why the Live8 bonanza was so misguided. Two decades ago, Sir Bob was at least demanding we give him our own fokkin' money. This time round, all he was asking was that we join him into bullying the G8 blokes to give us their taxpayers' fokkin' money.

Or as Dave Gilmour of Pink Floyd put it: "I want to do everything I can to persuade the G8 leaders to make huge commitments to the relief of poverty and increased aid to the Third World. It's crazy that America gives such a paltry percentage of its GNP to the starving nations."

No, it's not. It's no more crazy than Linda McCartney giving such a paltry percentage of her estate - ie, 0 per cent - to Gordon Brown. And, while Britain may be a Bananarama republic, it's not yet the full-blown thing.

Africa is a hard place to help. I had a letter from a reader the other day who works with a small Canadian charity in West Africa. They bought a 14-year-old SUV for 1,500 Canadian dollars to ferry food and supplies to the school they run in a rural village. Customs officials are demanding a payment of \$8,000 before they'll release it.

There are thousands of incidents like that all over Africa every day of the week. Yet, throughout the weekend's events, Dave Gilmour and Co were too busy Rocking Against Bush to spare a few moments to Boogie Against Bureaucracy or Caterwaul Against Corruption or Ululate Against Usurpation. Instead, Madonna urged the people to "start a revolution". Like Africa hasn't had enough of those these past 40 years?

Let's take it as read that Sir Bob and Sir Bono are exceptionally well informed and articulate on Africa's problems. Why then didn't they get the rest of the guys round for a meeting beforehand with graphs and pie charts and bullet points in bright magic markers, so that Sir Dave and Dame Madonna would understand that Africa's problem is not a lack of "aid". The tragedy of Live8 is that its message was as cobwebbed as its repertoire.

Don't get me wrong. I love old rockers - not for the songs, which are awful, but for their business affairs, which so totally rock. In 1997, David Bowie became the first pop star to hold a bond offering himself.

How about that? Fifty-five million dollars' worth of Bowie "class A royalty-backed notes" were snapped up in minutes after Moody's in New York gave them their coveted triple-A rating.

Once upon a time, rock stars weren't rated by Moody, they were moody - they self-destructed, they choked to death in their own vomit, they hoped to die before they got old. Instead, judging from Sir Pete Townshend on Saturday, they got older than anyone's ever been. Today, Paul McCartney is a businessman: he owns the publishing rights to Annie and Guys & Dolls. These faux revolutionaries are capitalists red in tooth and claw.

The system that enriched them could enrich Africa. But capitalism's the one cause the poseurs never speak up for. The rockers demand we give our fokkin' money to African dictators to manage, while they give their fokkin' money to Winthrop Stimson Putnam & Roberts to manage. Which of those models makes more sense?

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