

Update 19

## WHY WAS BRADFORD & BINGLEY (B&B) EXPROPRIATED BY GORDON BROWN?

Gordon Brown nationalised B&B in a transatlantic telephone conversation with Alistair Darling on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008, since then B&B share and bond holders have sent thousands of requests to various government departments and members of parliament asking how and why their company was destroyed in this way, to no avail thus far. At the time the Cabinet Office (CO) denied possession of any records, a statement which it admitted was incorrect in 2011. This was a flawed decision made in haste for political reasons and was neither equitable nor consistent with the support given to other banks. On the 10 June 2013 the Information Rights Tribunal failed to uphold the Bradford & Bingley Action Group (BBAG) appeal against the refusal of the Cabinet Office (CO) to provide the information requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) on the grounds of “public interest”. In BBAG’s view the public interest in how and why this decision to confiscate B&B by Gordon Brown far outweighs the need for secrecy in respect of the collective responsibility of Cabinet and Government decision making, particularly as the CO has refused to confirm or deny whether the Cabinet was involved in the decision.

Currently we have asked the Financial Conduct Authority to conduct an internal review into its failure to provide information under the FOIA, information for which it states no records can be found. BBAG has conclusive proof that the FCA had the information requested so either it has resorted to subterfuge or the records have been destroyed. The Treasury, Business Innovation & Skills and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office are also being pursued under the FOIA, the overall responses from them to date may be fairly described as slow moving obfuscation, a continuation of the treatment to which BBAG has been subjected for five years. An FOIA request was made to the BBC in respect of Robert Peston’s reports in the press and media, it stated that information for the purposes of journalism did not fall within the Act. A request to the Treasury asked for details of all communications between Mr Peston and his former colleague at the Financial Times Mr John Kingman who was Second Permanent Secretary at the Treasury. The Treasury stated that it had no records of any communication between Messrs Peston and Kingman and that when the latter left the Treasury at the end of 2008 information on his laptop, smart phone or other networked resources was cleared. It also stated that its policy and practice is that only the press office talks to the media other than in exceptional circumstances and there was no record of “on the record” briefings by policy officials with journalists in relation to B&B. This carefully worded statement raises further questions, first there is substantial circumstantial evidence pointing to many “off the record” briefings emanating from the Treasury of which it seems Mr Peston took full advantage, second why were Mr Kingman’s records cleared so soon after the B&B nationalisation? BBAG believes the behaviour of the Treasury in this matter has made a mockery of the FOIA 2000.

Despite Whitehall and Westminster's determination to suppress the truth during the past five years progress is being made. Philip Davies Conservative MP for Shipley, whose constituency includes Bingley, is to be commended for securing a promise during business questions in the Commons on the 4 July 2013 from Andrew Lansley, leader of the House of Commons, to raise this matter with the Chancellor George Osborne. However Mr Lansley pointed out that Mr Osborne would not have access directly to the papers of the previous administration.

When a government confiscates the property of its citizens without reason, explanation or compensation, particularly when it may be seen as at fault in its duty of care to savers and investors by not adequately regulating the companies involved in the banking crisis, then all concepts of democracy and equity are laid aside and the role of fair and honest government is devalued. BBAG is determined to secure the truth in this matter and the campaign will continue until it achieves success

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