

READING 1: *THE SUN* STYLE (See for yourself at <http://www.thesun.co.uk/>)

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Reading 2: *The Redtop's* greatest [?] headlines

1. **Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster** **Max Clifford, the PR man and fixer:** Well... (Laughs) Well, I was doing PR for Freddie at the time, and if you know Freddie over there, he's unpredictable, to say the least. In those days he was very funny and very talented. Um, things have changed in the last 10 years. But he was about to do a theatre tour - as I say, I was doing his PR - and, um, a girl went to the 'Sun' newspaper - our biggest daily newspaper, Rupert Murdoch's 'Sun' - and said, "Freddie had eaten my hamster." Apparently her boyfriend was a friend of Freddie's, they'd fallen out, the boyfriend thought this was a way of getting back at Freddie. So the editor of the 'Sun', Kelvin MacKenzie - the then editor - phoned me and said, "Max, we've got this story. What do you think? Are you going to try and stop it - in-junct, get the lawyers - or what?" I asked Freddie what he wanted to do, and he said he wanted to stop it. I asked his manager, and he said the same thing. Then I said to the editor of the 'Sun', "No, you go ahead," because my reasoning was it was going to be good publicity for Freddie. Most of his fans couldn't read or write anyway, so it wouldn't have mattered too much. And, um, fortunately it worked and he sold out a theatre tour. They added about another 40 dates, all were sold out, and he was working off the hamster story for about the last 15 years.

2. **Queen has rubber duck in her bath 5 October 2001:** The Queen was reported to share her bath with a yellow rubber duck that wears a crown. According to *The Sun*, the toy was spotted by a decorator as he refurbished Her Majesty's Buckingham Palace living quarters. It says a spokesman for the Queen would not comment on the duck. The paper reports the unnamed decorator saying: "I was repainting the Queen's bathroom walls in the same colour she's had for the last 50 years when I glanced down at the bath." I nearly fell off my step-ladder when I saw the yellow rubber duck with an inflatable crown on its head. "I suppose she was given it by her grandchildren as a joke." It was revealed recently the Queen has a mobile phone and a Big Mouth Billy Bass novelty singing fish.

3. **Sex trial of the century: January 18, 1999: Clinton / Lewinsky**

4. **Up Yours Delors** On November 1 1990 *The Sun* went on the offensive behind Margaret Thatcher's recent denunciation in Parliament of what she saw as the determination of Jacques Delors and the European Commission to impose the Ecu and take Britain through "the back door to a federal Europe." The now infamous front-page headline *Up Yours Delors* was strong, even by *The Sun's* standards. Alan Rusbridger in *The Guardian* acknowledged *The Sun's* long and successful tradition of being rude to foreigners - "The Wapping world is peopled by wops, eyties, spics, krauts, yanks, frogs, argies" but wrote that "seldom has it savaged one of its pet targets quite as viciously as it did yesterday", while Max Wilkinson, writing in *The Financial Times*, saw *The Sun's* "sickening chauvinism" as "an obvious, if wildly vulgarised, echo of what the prime minister was herself saying a few days earlier." A Labour M.E.P. called for the paper to be prosecuted for its "xenophobic racist attack", while Julian Critchley, Conservative MP for Aldershot denounced the article as "an appalling exercise in prejudice and bigotry." Meanwhile, Eurosceptic MPs were delighted and Thatcher's press secretary Bernard Ingham expressed the view that "At root, it is expressing the prejudices and feelings of the average Brit. It all adds to the joy of nations."

5. **Spot the Difference** Chirac likened to Saddam Hussein.

6. **11 September 2001** For once, *The Sun* played it straight. No headline except the lame tag

“Day that changed the world”.

**7. If Kinnock wins today, will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights?** 9 April 1992. *The Sun* had the head of the Labour leader, Neil Kinnock inside a light bulb and carried the pungent caption: John Major became PM and Kinnock left British politics for a second career in the EEC.

**8. IT'S THE SUN WOT WON IT** *The Sun* claimed the credit for the Tory victory in the 1992 elections. John Major became premier.

**9. THE SUN BACKS BLAIR** 27 April 1997. The next general election was due in 1997. The new Labour leader, Tony Blair, knew he had to woo Rupert Murdoch to win. He travelled all the way to Australia to address the media executives as Murdoch's guest and assured them he would bow to their economic ideology (neo-liberalism) which favours more wealth for the few at the expense of the many. Having secured his own terms, Murdoch promised Blair his support. *The Sun* ran a front page headline in 2-inch letters: **THE SUN BACKS BLAIR**. On 27 April, just 4 days before the election, the *News of the World*, the sister sex-and-scandal weekly followed with the headline: **WE BACK BLAIR** – Man for the New Millennium. After Labour's landslide victory, *The Sun* boasted in another headline: **IT'S THE SUN WOT SWUNG IT**, a play on its headline after the Tory victory in 1992, **IT'S THE SUN WOT WON IT**.)

**10. TYRANT'S IN HIS PANTS** Secretly taken photos of Saddam Hussein in prison in Iraq.

**11. GOTCHA** – **THE SUN**'s most famous headline, 4 May 1982 [See Week 11]

**12. THE SUN**'s nicer upmarket rival, *The Daily Mail*.

### READING 3: **THE SUN BACKGROUND AND EDITORIAL LINE**

**THE SUN** has the highest circulation of any daily English-language newspaper in the world, standing at around 3,200,000 copies daily in late-2004. The daily readership is just under 8,500,000 and it has more than twice as many readers in the ABC1 demographic than its upmarket stablemate *The Times*. It is published by News Group Newspapers of News International, itself a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Despite its mass popularity, many people hold negative views of the paper. They accuse it of being coarse and unprofessional; its journalistic style of being amateurish and sensationalist, designed to appeal to lowest common denominators and "dumb down" public discourse; and its editors and staff of being willing to print stories based on tenuous evidence, and to manipulate the news and even fabricate stories for partisan reasons.

**THE SUN** was launched in 1964 as a replacement for the *Daily Herald*, an ailing left-wing newspaper which Mirror Group Newspapers had bought from Odhams Press and the TUC. The changes did not help circulation and in 1969 the paper was sold to Murdoch. At this point, the newspaper became a tabloid. *The News of the World* presses were used during the week - Murdoch had bought that Sunday newspaper the previous year - and the two papers were now managed together at the senior executive levels.

**THE SUN'S** editorial content was popularised and coarsened (initially remaining loyal to the Labour Party) and the circulation increased, particularly when the Page Three Girl feature changed, on its first anniversary in 1970, from being a glamour pinup to a topless photograph, although "Page Three" was not a daily feature at first.

**THE SUN** overtook the circulation of its erstwhile stablemate *The Mirror* in 1978, partly thanks to remorseless advertising on ITV, featuring the actor Christopher Timothy. From 1981, **The Sun** used Bingo as a promotional tool to increase its circulation still further.

**THE SUN** was very profitable, despite the industrial relations of the 1970's - the so-called "Spanish practices" of the print unions - enabling Murdoch to expand to the United States from 1973. In 1986 Murdoch shut down the Bouverie Street premises of **The Sun** and *News of the World* and moved operations to the new Wapping complex, blocking union activity and greatly reducing the number of staff employed to print the papers; a year-long picket by sacked workers was eventually defeated. The increased profitability of the two tabloids helped Murdoch to launch the Sky satellite channels and to pursue predatory pricing of *The Times* (from 1993) against its own rivals.

#### POLITICAL STANCE

**THE SUN's** attitude to the Labour Party in the two 1974 elections was "agnostic", according to Roy Greenslade in *Press Gang* (2003). The then editor, Larry Lamb, was originally from a Labour background, with a socialist upbringing. Deputy editor Bernard Shrimmsley was a middle class (although not committed) Tory. Both Lamb and Shrimmsley were essentially bound by the decisions of Rupert Murdoch, who decided to back the Conservatives (See Chippindale, P. & Horrie, C. (1999) *Stick It Up Your Punter*).

**THE SUN** became sympathetic to the Conservative Party as the Labour government declined in



popularity and it urged its readers to vote Conservative in the election of 1979. The party was a strong champion of the Conservative leader, Margaret Thatcher, and her policies. It maintained its support for the Conservatives after Thatcher was succeeded by John Major in 1990. On the day of the 1992 election, its front-page headline was “If [Labour leader] Neil Kinnock wins today, will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights”, and two days later **The Sun** was so convinced of its contributions to the Conservative victory that it declared “It Was The Sun That Won It”.

**THE SUN** switched support to Labour following the 1994 election of Tony Blair to the leadership of the Labour Party. Since then it has - despite strong criticism of some of Labour’s policies - supported Labour in elections, partly because of a personal relationship between Blair and Murdoch. Murdoch has been accused of trying to exploit his relationship with Blair, and with Thatcher before him, to further his business interests and influence public policy, whilst both politicians have been accused of pandering to the media mogul. More recently, some critics have suggested that both News Corporation staff and politicians in Britain have over-estimated the influence of **The Sun** on voters.

**THE SUN** maintains a right-wing view, staunchly anti-European and conservative, although this has not stopped it giving support to the ruling “New Labour” Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair since 1997. This was repeated in 2001 and 2005, despite Labour usually having opposite views to the paper.

**THE SUN’S** critics accuse it of being jingoistic, sensationalistic and subservient to Murdoch’s point of view. It infamously printed the headline “Gotcha” when, during the Falklands [Malvinas] War, Argentinian ship the General Belgrano was sunk, and often refers to foreign leaders in unflattering terms — such as dubbing president Jacques Chirac of France “le Worm”. Support of British troops — referred to as “Our Boys” — in action is invariably unequivocal and, like all Murdoch-owned media, the paper has fully supported the ongoing war in Iraq. The tabloid is also famous for its anti-German headlines and stories, for example in connection with Football, Pope Benedict XVI and the European Union.

**THE SUN** frequently makes remarks disparaging of foreign countries, especially neighbours of the United Kingdom, with the usage of slurs. However, the paper is very overtly Atlanticist, and supportive of the United States.

**THE SUN** is profoundly homophobic. This started in the 1980s as the new Greater London Council led by Ken Livingstone gave (modest) financial support to various gay rights and support groups. When Peter Mandelson was “outed” by Matthew Parris (a gay former columnist on *The Sun*) on *Newsnight* in October 1999, the paper called for it to be stated whether Britain was governed by a “gay mafia”, as there were then several openly gay members of the British Cabinet, only for the paper’s attitudes to be completely reversed the next day, because of the uproar which had ensued. In reality, Chris Smith, Nick Brown and Mandelson were by no means allies.

**THE SUN** was also condemned for its coverage of the 1989 Hillsborough football stadium disaster in Sheffield, where it printed allegations against Liverpool football fans that were later found to be untrue. This caused a boycott of **The Sun** in Liverpool. It made a full page ‘apology’ on July 7, 2004, 15 years after the disaster, which has been criticised by some as self-serving.

### TOP OF THE TABLOIDS

**THE SUN** relies heavily on the entertainment industry and sport as well as news and politics for its content, with many items often revolving around celebrities and similar individuals. In addition to writers covering celebrities-about-town and the latest soap opera storylines, the paper is always on the lookout for celebrities in trouble or dishabille. Pictures are preferred and **The Sun** often uses pictures taken by paparazzi. Outside celebrity-based content, common story themes include immigration, security scandals, the so-called “destruction of the British way of life” by Europe, domestic abuse and paedophiles - though some people suggested that the latter was once undermined by a beautiful baby competition (with plenty of photographs of young children) run at the same time which they claimed might attract the attention of unsavoury individuals.

The current editor is Rebekah Wade, the first female editor in the paper’s history.

### EDITORS

**Sidney Jacobsen** (1964–1965) (previously editor of the *Daily Herald* before the name change)

**Dick Dinsdale** (1965–1969)

Larry Lamb (1969–1972)

**Bernard Shrimmsley** (1972–1975) (Lamb was “editorial director”, supervising both **The Sun** and **NOW**)

**Larry Lamb** (1975–1980) (Lamb took an enforced six month sabbatical before being sacked by Murdoch)

**Kelvin MacKenzie** (1981–1994)

**Stuart Higgins** (1994–1998)

**David Yelland** (1998–2003)

**Rebekah Wade** (2003–)

[adapted from Wikipedia]