

Edgeways Miscellany no. 11
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Farewell *Eye*

A button on the Home Page takes you to our *Eyewash* series of comments on *Private Eye*. The following exchange is our last comment the subject, unless there is a revival of interest, because the *Eye* is at present just too BORING, with standards of gossip taken from the celebrity magazines.

Dear Mr Hislop,

After some years of thinking—and it may still be true—that you were the only paper in the country with any independent literary intelligence left that could give the reader a sense of the real state of things (the appalling media and the salesman’s farce of media-dominated politics), it seems that you have exhausted your usefulness. You have become part of it all.

Others, I know, say, boring, repetitious, a bi-weekly recycling of the formulae, not satire (the complacent assumption) but “satire”—the economy brand. The only interesting thing is why this has come about, with a kind of inevitability.

If you were real satire, you would still show some hope of having an effect (perhaps you would get yourself sued more often, as you used). But now you are content (you show no sign either of registering your own weakness) merely to maintain a fantasy of your own purpose. You are your own Polly Fillers, and Phil Spaces, your own Ed Giggles (giggling at yourselves as you write it up); your own principle of existence the same as that of the people you still point the finger at in your “street of shame”. You feed off it all, of course, but now subject to the same compulsions, and part of the problem you pretend to cure. This used to be called parasitism—a predatory version though—or hypocrisy. Or cynicism, the kind appropriate to the word hack (and look what you have made of the word *hack*). The hack who has always tried to defend himself too, by calling others bores.

It is a state of economy, of course. Not just yours. And the economy—your economy, your jobs, your *personality*—must be kept going at all costs. The terror of thinking otherwise! (And there would be a logic of thinking that you *ought* to pack it in.) You are celebrities, now, you are success, you are a big business. A brand. You shouldn’t allow others the opportunity to use phrases you are well aware of, such as “past the sell-by date”.

It is a curious thing now that when one reads or watches you, that although there are good laughs to be had, there is a remainder permanently undealt with of something not funny at all. Things *are* pretty bad. You need to try to put the finger on the cause, better than you do. It is the same thing that reproduces the Blairs, Camerons, Cleggs, Milibands, Cheries and Hillaries, in a reproductive complicity. Not a presence, so much as an absence.

There must be a principle you can find beyond that of continuing your own existence.

Brian Lee

Dear Brian Lee

Thanks for your letter and your comments. Sorry to disappoint.

Ian Hislop

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