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Newspapers support recycling:

Recycled paper made up 80.6 per cent of the raw material for UK newspapers in 2006

Obama's near universal love-in

Cumbrian PR and media adviser **Alan Air** assesses press reaction to the success of Barack Obama in his end-of-year column on what the papers say



Such was the UK media's almost universal sunny reaction to the election of Barack Obama as US President Elect that I turned to grim-faced Simon Heffer of *The Daily Telegraph* for a detached, cool assessment.

He quickly brought the temperature down to absolute zero with his life-sapping observation that, "one cannot help but have one overwhelming feeling: that the expectations are so insanely high, and the reality both at home and abroad so intractable in the short or even the medium term, that this is an administration that cannot but disappoint. As in all politics, the election itself signifies the beginning of the end of the honeymoon." And the sun will one day expand and incinerate the earth and there is probably no God so why worry and you're just an old sourpuss, Simon.

Thankfully, Andrew Rawnsley of *The Observer* was on hand to raise a smile by reminding us how ludicrous it is for David Cameron, the Conservative son of a stockbroker married to the daughter of an aristocrat to claim political kinship with an American liberal whose father originates from rural Kenya and whose mother made ends meet with food stamps. "The Tory leader will be claiming next that he is descended from a long line



AP Photo/David Guttenfelder

Oh boy, Obama: President-elect Barack Obama and his wife Michelle at his election night party at Grant Park in Chicago

of old Etonian goatherds," he concluded tartly.

BRANDED

The *Mail on Sunday* and *Daily Mail*-generated furore over Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand's crass phone call to Andrew Sachs is proof, if any is needed, that some in the tabloid press are getting desperate in their battle with the internet and 24-hour rolling news. Public service broadcasting is always going to throw up the odd soft target.

While on this occasion the BBC wasn't sharp

enough to spot an own goal and heads are rolling at the corporation like *la Terreur* during the French Revolution, it is worth asking ourselves which heads roll exactly when newspapers gratuitously kiss'n'tell about the sex lives of their hapless victims – in effect the central charge made against Ross and Brand.

Certainly, any moral high ground was instantly lost when an article by Piers Morgan condemned Brand as a "sex-obsessed ex-junkie who will say literally anything to make a cheap tabloid headline".

Yes, the same Piers Morgan who when editor of the *Mirror* published fake photographs of British troops torturing Iraqi prisoners, described by one British colonel as a "recruiting poster" for al-Qaeda.

In this silly, over-hyped affair the wisest comment I read emanated not from a journalist but from *Young Ones* comedian Adrian Edmondson writing in *The Independent*. "The noise about BBC editorial procedure is a smokescreen, but a dangerous one. Once we start passing all jokes through endless taste controls we'll cripple people's abilities to make jokes" and "end up in some kind of puritanical Britain where they start putting underpants on church spires because they look a bit phallic." Quite.

BALLS-UP

And finally... I do wish Schools Secretary Ed Balls – clearly a character that children's writer Roger Hargreaves rejected – would change his surname but not his mind. It is impossible not to wince when banner headlines about educational policy reversals scream BALLS IN U-TURN. Mine are in freefall just thinking about it. Merry Christmas.

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