

Tekst 3

Comics being serious? Don't make me laugh!

1 IF YOU are reading this
with a squeaky red plastic
ball attached to the end of
your nose, then read no
5 further. You will not enjoy
what follows. Yes, I know that
this is the day set aside for
national hilarity, and I should be
laughing my head off as I reach
10 for my chequebook. But I cannot
get into the spirit of the thing.
The whole idea of Comic Relief's
Red Nose Day¹⁾ fills me with the
most profound gloom – and I 4
15 know that I am not alone.

2 Before I go any further, I
ought to set out exactly what I am
not saying. Above all, I am not
saying that people should be
discouraged from contributing to
20 the Comic Relief appeal. On
the whole, Comic Relief has
established a good and
improving record over the
25 years for supporting charities
that actually do good. It has
learnt from its mistakes.
Money given to Comic Relief is
now very much more likely to be
30 spent on relieving suffering than
is government-to-government 5
aid, which, as a pamphlet
published yesterday by the
Centre for Policy Studies makes
35 clear, has too often gone to
subsidising arms, repression and
corruption. No, most of Comic
Relief's charities are eminently
worthy causes, and the appeal
40 richly deserves everyone's
support.

3 Nor am I questioning the 6
motives of the comedians who
run the appeal. I believe that they
45 are driven by a genuine desire to
do good and not, as snide critics
suggest, just to look good. It does
not bother me that most of them
have large houses, with Ferraris
50 in the drive. All the more

understandable that they should
want to give up some of their
time and energy to helping those
less fortunate. Nor do I blame
55 other celebrities – ministers,
actors, television cooks, etc – who
have been roped in to do stupid
and embarrassing things for the
cause. If they stood on their
60 dignity and refused, the tabloids
would tear them to shreds:
“Humourless Minister Snubs 7
Starving Children”.

It is the element of moral
65 blackmail, pervading the whole
event, that stifles my laughter and
makes me feel sick. For the fact is
that preaching and comedy simply
70 do not mix. To be any good, a
preacher must be an authority-

*Money given to Comic Relief is
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is government-to-government aid*

Tom Utley

figure. If a comedian is any good,
he will subvert authority.

There is no more humourless
activity than analysing what
75 makes us laugh. But subversion is
obviously the key: the
archbishop slipping on the
banana-skin; John Redwood, the
cleverest man in the last Tory
80 cabinet, opening and shutting his
mouth like a cod, pretending to
know the words of the Welsh
national anthem.

The Comic Relief comedians
85 clearly understand this point.
Year after year, they have all
looked hideously uncomfortable
when required to switch from 9
90 mirth to solemnity, comedian to
preacher, in the course of an
evening's TV show. All the
indications are that tonight's six-

hour bore-in on BBC1 will follow
the pattern of the past: Lenny
95 Henry, pulling a comic face and
putting on a silly voice in the
studio; cut to Lenny Henry in
sub-Saharan Africa, pulling a
long, solemn, caring face and
100 telling us that children are
riddled with disease here, for lack
of nothing more luxurious than
clean water.

The trouble is that we have all
105 become so conditioned to laugh-
ing when we see Lenny Henry's
face – or that of any other national
comedian – that we find ourselves
looking for laughs in all the wrong
110 places: Ho! Ho! There is good old
Lenny strutting his funky stuff in
some African village. Hang on!

That wretched child sitting
on his knee is all skin and
115 bones. This isn't funny. This
is heart-rending.

8 Britons have long been
contemptuous of the
Germans for their
120 supposed lack of a sense of
humour and their readiness to
submit to authority. Indeed, it is
easy to see Red Nose Day
rendered as an anti-German joke,
125 with an authority-figure
comedian in charge: “Ve vill now show
you a clip of a humorous tele-
vision programme. You vill now
larff. Ve vill now show you a clip
130 of people suffering in Efrica. You
vill now cry. You vill now feel
bad zat you vere larffing a
moment ago. You vill now reach
for your chequebook.” But no
135 self-respecting German would
dare attempt such a vulgar
manipulation of the emotions.

The awful truth is that this
utterly humourless event is
140 typically British.

‘The Daily Telegraph’, March 12, 1999

noot 1

Comic Relief's Red Nose Day: annual national British charity TV campaign conducted by comedians wearing red noses

■ Tekst 3 Comics being serious? Don't make me laugh!

- 1p 4 ■ 'You will not enjoy what follows.' (lines 5–6)
Who will not enjoy what follows?
Someone who
A cannot afford to spend money on charity.
B does not have a sense of humour.
C shares the writer's view on Red Nose Day.
D supports Red Nose Day.
- 1p 5 ■ How could paragraph 2 also begin?
A However, before I go any further...
B Moreover, before I go any further...
C Therefore, before I go any further...
- 1p 6 □ Vat de hoofdgedachte van alinea 2 in één zin samen.
- 1p 7 ■ How, according to paragraph 3, does the writer look upon 'the comedians who run the appeal' (lines 43–44)?
He considers them to be
A hypocritical.
B naïve.
C professional.
D sincere.
- 1p 8 ■ What is the writer's attitude towards 'other celebrities', according to lines 54–63 ('Nor do ... Starving Children'.)?
A Admiration.
B Contempt.
C Ridicule.
D Understanding.
- 1p 9 □ 'The Comic Relief comedians clearly understand this point.' (regel 84–85)
Welke zin uit alinea 4, 5 of 6 vat samen wat wordt bedoeld met 'this point'?
Citeer de eerste twee en de laatste twee woorden van deze zin.
- 1p 10 ■ What is the example in paragraph 7 meant to illustrate?
A Lenny Henry's popularity in Great Britain.
B The misery of people who live in Third World countries.
C The public's growing indifference to human suffering.
D The writer's reservations about the Comic Relief formula.
- 1p 11 ■ What does the writer suggest about Red Nose Day in paragraph 8?
A It could do with some advice from foreign TV producers.
B It exploits TV viewers' sense of guilt in order to collect money.
C It fails to appeal to the British sense of humour.
D It strengthens the British prejudice against certain other nations.
- 1p 12 ■ Which of the following sentences expresses the writer's attitude towards Comic Relief best?
A 'It is ... feel sick.' (lines 64–67)
B 'There is ... laugh.' (lines 73–75)
C 'Year ... TV show.' (lines 86–91)
D 'The trouble ... Ho! Ho!' (lines 104–110)