

THE THOUGHTS OF ROBERT.....

Robert Maxwell is a big man. In almost all senses of the word. Physically imposing with an authoritative and confident manner, he inevitably becomes the centre of attraction and influence in any enterprise in which he becomes involved.

He owns, or effectively controls the Daily Record, the Sunday Mail, the Daily Mirror, Oxford United Football Club and a large printing and publishing company.

And now he is chairman of the Commonwealth Games fund-raising committee concerned with finding the finance which ensures that the up coming games pay for themselves.

Considering the man's stature and experience the Sentinel decided to seek his views on both the imminent Edinburgh Games and the world of the press in which he had become such an outspoken member.

First of all, why did he become involved in the Games organisation?

"I was invited to set up a lifeboat to assist in raising the balance of the cash required to ensure that the Games go forward to the same success of the friendly games in 1970.

Are you worried at all about the recent news of unsold tickets for the Games?

"No, not at all. The balance of tickets are going quite well and fast, and if people who want to go to such parts of the Games as interest them are not to be disappointed they must apply quickly."

What would you say the purpose of the Games is, over and above the showcasing of athletic ability?

"The purpose of the games is for nations to compete on a friendly basis

is a peaceful way, rather than doing it in a warlike basis."

Of what benefit are the Games to the city and people of Edinburgh?

"The benefits to the city and people of Edinburgh are first, an immediate benefit in jobs and also the bringing of prosperity by the many people who will be coming here preceding and during the Games spending their money."

"Also I and many other people know the friendliness of the Scottish people and the greatness of Scotland and Edinburgh, its tradition, environment and architecture."

"All of these things will attract people and consequently the friendships made during the period of the Games will lead to personal satisfaction and many good and wholesome things whose benefits cannot be calculated or measured"

According to a survey (see Street Sentinel), which we carried out, the ordinary people of Edinburgh are very enthusiastic about the Games. Given the apparent level of public backing why do you think there was so much difficulty in finding the finance for the Games?

"That is a mystery which can only be explained by saying that the ordinary people who give backing to the games are not the same as those who have the money. Those that have the money may not have been as enthusiastic and believed in the Games as much as they should have done. Also, perhaps the Games were not promoted as well as they could have been. It's really been a combination of a lot of things. Fortunately however, all those problems are now over and the commitment which you have identified at a popular level is now being harnessed. We will be asking people not only in Scotland,

but in England to put their hands in their pockets and support the Games."

"Another reason for the problems is that business people feel that they are paying enough taxes and they say the Games have been supported by the Government in the past and why should that not continue?"

Is your commitment to the Games a result of your commitment to Scotland through your ownership of the Daily Record and Sunday Mail?

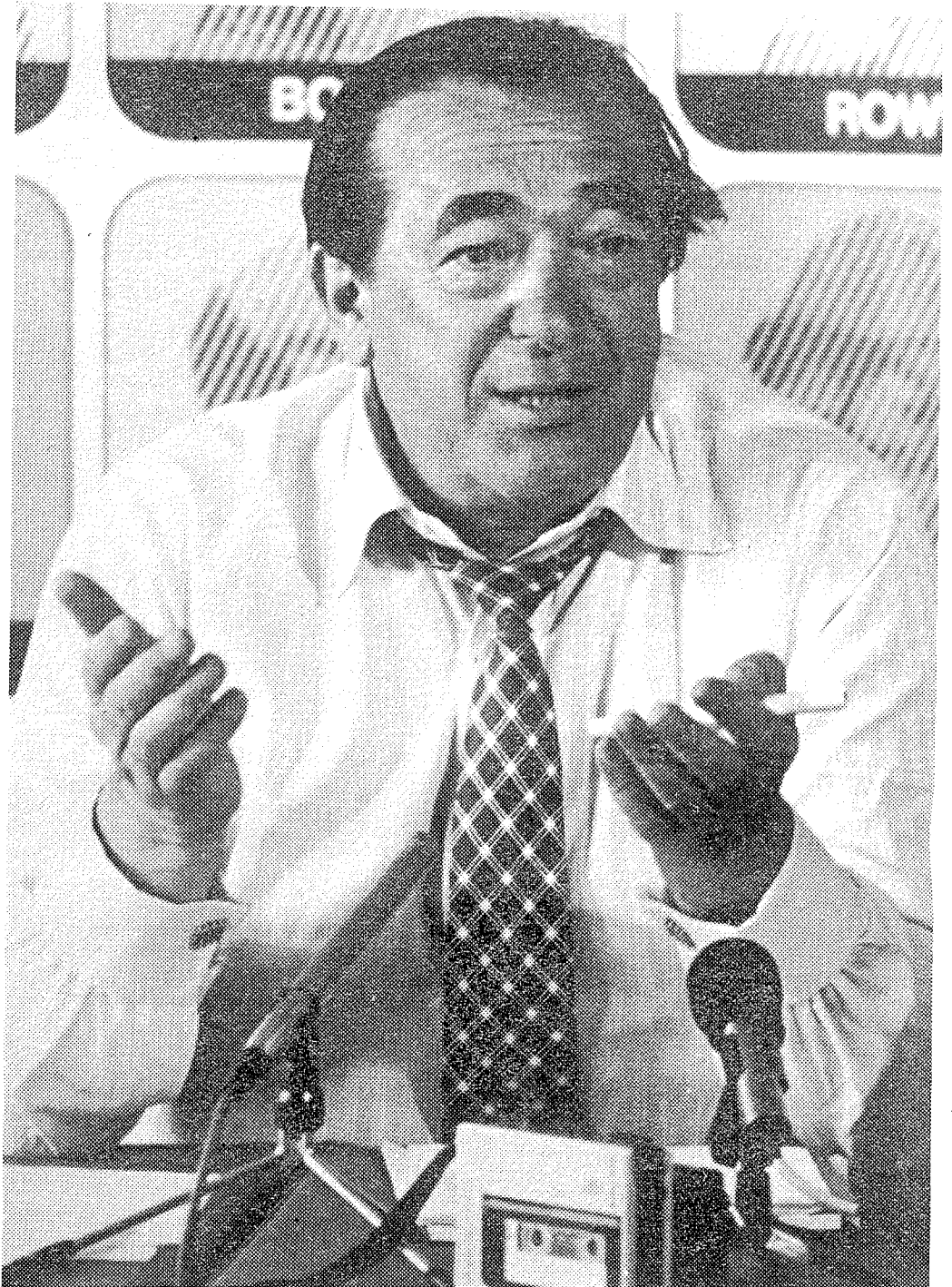
"My commitment to the Games arises through the difficulty notwithstanding the efforts of the Games Committee, of the necessary cash being raised to finance the event.

This problem would have led to the appointing of a receiver and the cancellation of the Games. This would have done incalculable harm to the good name of Scotland and Britain and we could not allow that to have happened. Also all of those efforts which had been put in by my colleagues to these Games and which had come so close to the target could not possibly have been allowed to be fruitless through the Games' cancellation."

Will the sporting success you have had with Oxford United continue with these Games?

"Well, I am a winner and certainly intend that that shall be the case. That is in fact a good comparison and I thank you for reminding me about it.

Whilst we are on this subject, I shall tell you that I'm hoping to interest Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland in playing charity matches in support of the Games. This is something I have not told anyone else and I'm happy to announce it through the Sentinel."



Can we talk now about the Press? Tell us first of all why you decided to get involved in this industry.

"I decided to get involved in order to make a contribution to the halt of the retreat of the United Kingdom which has gone on for so long."

What do you think of the present dispute at Wapping, how can and should it be resolved?

"I've always believed that this dispute can and must be resolved by an agreement between the trade unions and Mr Murdoch. There is no other way. In a free society you cannot have a total victory and a total vanquished. You have to have a compromise and a settlement."

What do you think is the relationship between the national press and the community press, for example do the Daily Record and the Sentinel compete with each other or compliment each other.

"We both compete and compliment each other. This is a small country, we

have a very powerful national press and equally we have a very powerful community press but I believe there is undoubtedly room for co-existence."

Do you believe in the sentiment put out by some people that the next Labour Government should set up a state fund which would allow easier access to the press for ordinary people?

"No, once you start government funding or involvement you go down a very slippery road."

"Of course the press is not perfect and we do make mistakes, but when state funding starts there is a tendency for only good news to appear. One example of this is a Russian statesman who once asked me why no news about his country ever appeared in the Daily Mirror. This indicates the expectations that politicians may have and which could be encouraged through state funding."

How do you feel about the powers of the Press Council, the watchdog of the press. Do you believe that it should be

strengthened, say that it be given the power to shut down a paper such as the Sun, which has been found to have made up stories?

"No, this is another thing I would not go along with. As I have said before our press is not perfect but such moves would mean that someone would have to be given the task of, for instance, investigating stories to decide whether they had been made up. This I think would be very difficult to do."

So we end on a very difficult question for Robert Maxwell.

He is obviously not keen on any great change within his industry. Some may think that this is only natural considering his own power and privileged position. You can make your own mind up. But his commitment to the 1986 Commonwealth Games cannot be questioned and it's certain that through his and many other less famous people's efforts these Games shall be a success.

Stewart McRobert

