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From the office of:
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY
Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit

PTW

NT/AM

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D Stephen

I enclose an article that was in 'Campaign' magazine which I thought the Prime Minister might be interested to see.

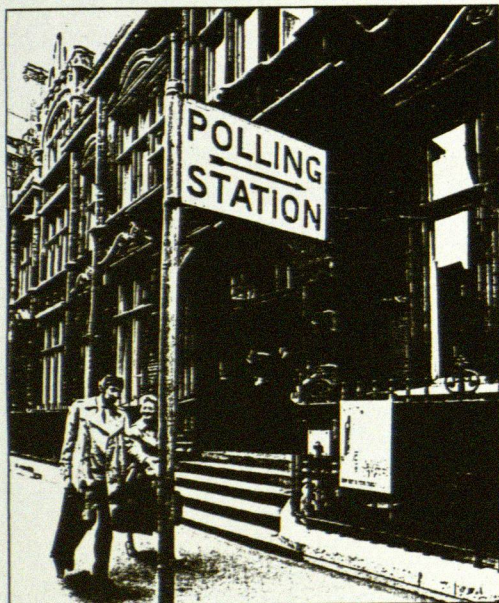
of ever.
Norman

Stephen Sherbourne, Esq.



Political advertising is widely acknowledged to have confirmed its legitimacy at the hustings, yet for all the hype in the recent election, the political landscape remained largely unchanged. So did advertising influence the voters? *Campaign* commissioned Mass-Observation to discover what effect political ads had on the electorate and Rebecca Eliahoo analyses the results of its survey

What the voters thought of the election ad circus



Voters... were they influenced by political advertising?

One of the myriad subjects of discussion during the recent election was the extent to which political advertising had an effect on the electorate. Did the parties waste their money on advertising? Who had the best — and worst — campaign? Did the advertising influence the way people voted? Was there too much political publicity this year? Should ads be banned altogether?

The election may be over but, as Disraeli said, finality is not the language of politics. *Campaign* commissioned Mass-Observation to ask around 1,000 people in England, Scotland and Wales some of the above questions and their answers appear in the accompanying tables.

The first question: which party did the best political broadcasts on television, elicited a predictable response. Of all those prepared to give an opinion, 36 per cent plumped for Labour. This was, no doubt, in no small measure due to Hugh Hudson and Colin Welland's opus (repeated because of what Labour termed "popular request") depicting Neil Kinnock as Labour's Lochinvar and the man who single-handedly routed Militant Tendency. Even 21 per cent of

the Tory voters in the survey and 31 per cent of Alliance voters interviewed thought Labour's party election broadcast was better than the others.

Neither Margaret Thatcher in twin-set and pearls nor the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber moved more than 43 per cent of Tory voters to praise the Conservative broadcast, while the most self-critical (or honest?) group were the Alliance voters: only 16 per cent thought their own PEB was up to scratch.

Inevitably, the answer to the second question (which party had the worst PEB) was, the Alliance. Nearly one third of all the respondents gave the Liberal/SDP broadcasts the thumbs down and, what is more, 26 per cent of their own voters agreed. The Alliance ad campaign never really got off the ground — hardly surprising given the tiny amounts it spent on advertising.

The survey also throws up another interesting view: although Labour won top marks for its PEB, it also received 17 per cent of total votes for the worst party political broadcast, which seems to indicate that its new style of broadcasting was sufficiently extreme to turn more people off than the Conservative party's more pedestrian efforts.

Although it seemed that this year saw an annoying escalation in overpowering media coverage of the election, only nine per cent of respondents were too bored, weary or uninterested in the party broadcasts to either switch them off altogether or avoid seeing them. Odd really, because viewers have plenty of opportunity to zap PEBs since they are announced beforehand — unlike commercials which can creep up on you without your realising it.

When it came to political leaflets dropping through letterboxes, respondents were more partisan. In other words, Labour tended to think Labour's junk mail was best, the Tory party thought its mail was best and so on. It could be argued that somehow this older form of political publicity represents a reinforcement of voters' views. Political broadsheets appear to be a bald statement of policy. It would therefore be an act of disloyalty to choose another party's leaflets above your own.

Similarly, when asked who produced the worst leaflets, respondents tended to pick their most dangerous rival. So Labour voters were more likely to denigrate Tory leaflets, Tory voters gave Labour leaflets the thumbs down and the Alliance voters thought leaflets from both the left and right were awful. (Interestingly, nearly one fifth of Tory respondents, 12 per cent of Labour and 13 per cent of Alliance respondents didn't remember receiving any at all.)

During at least two weeks of election fever, press ads for every party appeared in just about every newspaper in Britain and posters went up all over the country. However, just 70 per cent of respondents claimed to have seen press or poster ads. Of those, three quarters of Tory voters spotted press and poster campaigns whereas only 63 per cent of Labour voters said they saw any.

The Conservatives drew the largest response to their press and poster publicity with 81 per cent



Labour poster... respondents felt



Labour PEB... Labour's Lochinvar



Tories... press and poster



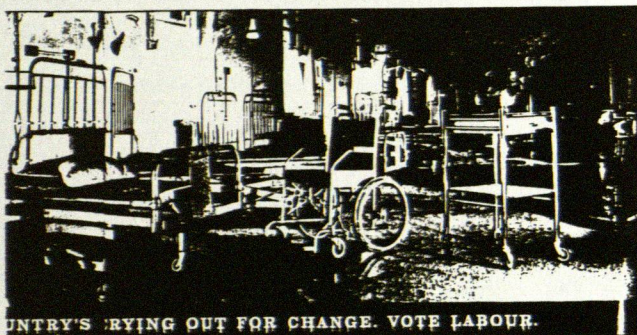
Conservative PEB... twin-set and pearls



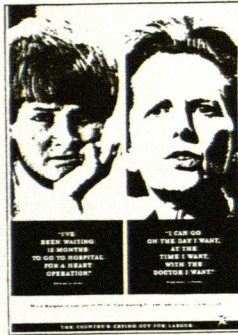
Alliance PEB... thumbs down



The two Davids



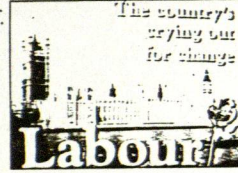
respondents felt these ads had 'more impact'



Labour press... special mention



Labour's Lochinvar and the man who single-handedly routed Militant Tendency



Labour: Although it scored top marks for its PEBs, their radical new style was extreme enough to turn more people off than the Conservative's more pedestrian broadcasts

advertising awareness; 76 per cent of respondents noticed the Labour press and poster campaigns while only 49 per cent spotted the Alliance's ads. The latter figure is understandable insofar as the Alliance spent far less money on advertising than did its two major rivals.

However, when asked which one advertisement out of the multitude they would choose as the best, it was easy to see that no single ad caught the public's imagination. Over half of the Labour voters, 58 per cent of Tories and 40 per cent of Alliance voters couldn't recall any press or poster ads at all. People remembered the tone of the campaigns but very few remembered any executions, suggesting that none of the various agencies and "marketing advisers" had managed to get through the election noise to leave their audience with any strong image.

"We have just finished some research on men's reactions to advertising," says Chris Wilkins, creative director of Davis Wilkins, "and out of 64 men questioned, they could only remember six press ads in any category. Men aren't interested in press advertising although they can recall TV commercials, especially for lager.

"I think on balance that the actual results of the election reflected the skills of the advertising. The Tory stuff was more adult, intelligent and rational and even when it descended to more knock-about ads like the soldier with his arms in the air, it was the best of the lot. I felt Labour's press and poster campaigns were rather gloomy and their talk about a Dickensian England seemed to rub off on their own image."

Of those respondents in the survey who felt Labour's press or poster campaigns were best, four per cent cited the Kinnock presidential party election broadcast on television (thus highlighting an interesting confusion of media), while another four per cent felt Labour's ads had "more impact". Specific ads mentioned were the NHS ward complete with bunch of red roses — "Try telling him, try telling her" — and the image of the boy unable to have an operation.

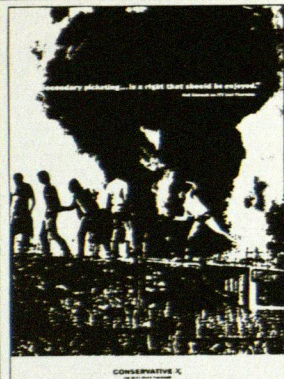
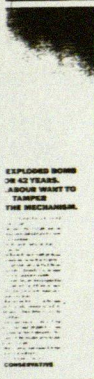
In the pro-Alliance camp, eight per cent of respondents were impressed by local candidate posters (so much for national advertising), while four per cent were wild about the picture of both Davids. Other comments included a taste for the party's "eye-catching colours", "black writing" and "large print" — evidence that political messages are often in the eye of the beholder.

Six per cent of Conservative fans mentioned the advertising which tackled defence issues and five per cent enjoyed anything that "mocked Labour or poked fun at Labour's claims". Moreover, when asked which party had the best posters and press ads overall, the Tories won the most accolades with a total of 41 per cent (20 per cent of Labour voters even thought the Tories had the edge when it came to press and posters, as did 43 per cent of Alliance voters). Finally, just under one third of all respondents claimed that the Alliance dredged up the worst press and poster campaigns, a legacy, one feels, due more to paltry budgets than lack of input from David Abbott.

LABOUR'S POLICY ON ARMS.



Tories: They won most accolades for the best poster and press advertisements, even Labour voters gave them the edge, but no single ad in any of the main parties' campaigns caught the public's imagination

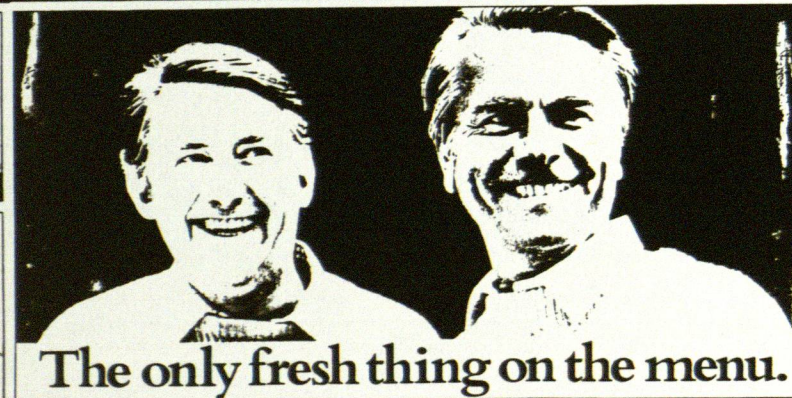


press and posters



set and pearls image failed to move some supporters

Attack on the left... ads poking fun at Labour's claims



The two Davids... often outshone by local candidate posters

Alliance: Nearly 33 per cent of voters thought it had the worst poster and press ads and television broadcasts — a legacy due more to paltry budgets than lack of creative input



Soho is expecting a new arrival. Or two.



Q1: Which party did the best PEBs on TV?

	991	416	312	223	20
Total people:	Total %	%	%	%	%
Conservative	25	43	8	19	24
Labour	36	21	60	31	42
Alliance	6	3	4	16	—
Communist	—	—	—	—	—
Green Party	—	—	—	—	—
Scottish Nationalist	—	—	—	—	—
Plaid Cymru	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—
Equally good	3	2	4	3	5
Equally bad	2	2	3	3	5
Didn't see any	9	10	6	8	11
Don't know/no opinion	18	18	15	19	17

Q2: Which party did the worst PEBs on TV?

	991	416	312	223	20
Total people:	Total %	%	%	%	%
Conservative	12	5	21	15	20
Labour	17	26	4	20	5
Alliance	30	30	35	26	28
Communist	—	—	—	—	—
Green Party	1	1	1	3	—
Scottish Nationalist	1	1	3	—	4
Plaid Cymru	1	1	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—
Equally good	2	2	2	2	5
Equally bad	3	3	3	4	5
Didn't see any	9	10	6	9	11
Don't know/no opinion	22	21	25	22	21

Q3: Which party mailed the best leaflets?

	991	416	312	223	20
Total people:	Total %	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	39	7	10	24
Labour	21	6	49	12	5
Alliance	16	11	8	38	—
Communist	—	—	—	—	—
Green Party	—	—	—	1	—
Scottish Nationalist	1	—	1	—	16
Plaid Cymru	—	—	1	1	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—
Equally good	5	4	5	7	4
Equally bad	2	2	2	3	5
Didn't see any	15	19	12	13	16
Don't know/no opinion	19	20	15	19	30

Delaney: 'I felt the reaction by the press to Kinnock's PEB was overblown, but overall Labour looked as if it was pushing harder — it was a case of the underdog making a better case for itself'

◀ "Because of the sheer weight of the media coverage, it is difficult to differentiate between advertising and editorial," says Tim Delaney, creative director of Leagas Delaney and one of a team who worked for James Callaghan during the 1979 election campaign. "It's like asking people which one of Robin Day's interviews was best or worst. Just to be able to feel the tone of the campaigns is good going. I felt the reaction in the newspapers to Kinnock's party election broadcast was overblown: it had good touches but the execution was patchy, although it used music well. Overall, Labour looked as if it was pushing harder, it had more and better advertising ideas — it was a case of the underdog making a better case for itself."

Malcolm Gluck, creative direc-

tor of SSC and B Lintas and a self-confessed floating voter, was remarkably unimpressed by the general level of political advertising. "I believe Labour seriously underestimated the intelligence of floating voters in its advertising — people realised that the Government had failed to tackle, or had exacerbated, problems of inner city decay, health and education, but they also understand that politicians don't operate in a perfect world and that the Tories had managed to correct some defects (such as the relationship between the unions and the law) which no Labour government could or would address. I felt that no single, arresting image, message or piece of communication was created by any of the parties. It was all dull and predictable."

While John Hegarty, creative ▶



We'll be producing any day now.

Q4: Which party mailed the worst leaflets?

Total people:	Voted Conservative		Voted Labour		Voted Alliance		Voted other party	
	991	416	312	223	20			
	Total %	%	%	%	%			
Conservative	13	4	24	18	5			
Labour	17	26	5	20	18			
Alliance	11	11	14	7	9			
Communist	1	—	1	2	—			
Green Party	1	1	2	1	—			
Scottish Nationalist	2	—	3	2	4			
Plaid Cymru	1	—	1	1	—			
Others	—	—	—	2	—			
Equally good	4	4	4	4	—			
Equally bad	3	2	4	4	5			
Didn't see any	18	22	16	14	20			
Don't know/no opinion	28	30	27	25	39			

Q5: Which party had the best poster or press ads?

Total people:	Voted Conservative		Voted Labour		Voted Alliance		Voted other party	
	690	313	195	154	15			
	Total %	%	%	%	%			
Conservative	41	55	20	43	17			
Labour	24	11	50	18	31			
Alliance	9	8	3	16	—			
Communist	—	—	—	—	—			
Green Party	—	—	—	—	—			
Scottish Nationalist	—	—	1	—	6			
Plaid Cymru	—	—	—	—	—			
Others	—	—	—	—	—			
Equally good	7	9	6	4	5			
Equally bad	3	2	1	7	7			
Don't know/no opinion	16	15	18	13	35			

Q6: Which party had the worst poster or press ads?

Total people:	Voted Conservative		Voted Labour		Voted Alliance		Voted other party	
	690	313	195	154	15			
	Total %	%	%	%	%			
Conservative	10	4	18	11	9			
Labour	14	20	5	17	5			
Alliance	30	29	33	31	18			
Communist	1	—	1	1	—			
Green Party	2	3	1	5	—			
Scottish Nationalist	1	1	3	1	—			
Plaid Cymru	1	1	1	1	—			
Others	—	—	—	—	—			
Equally good	3	5	3	1	5			
Equally bad	3	3	1	3	12			
Don't know/no opinion	35	35	35	30	51			

Twivy: 'I think advertising is primarily a persuasive art and should achieve a change in voting patterns. A campaign which left them unchanged can hardly be hailed as great'

director of Bartle Bogle Hegarty, decried the poor overall standards of creativity apparent in the general election campaign, he also believed that Labour's approach put political advertising on the map. Paul Twivy, managing director of Still Price Court Twivy D'Souza, disagrees: "Advertising is meant primarily to be a persuasive art and should actually achieve a change in people's voting, buying or thinking patterns. I hardly think that a campaign which left voting patterns unchanged can be hailed as great."

Inevitably, the one result of this survey which will, no doubt, be seized upon with relish by both Alliance and Labour officials, is the overwhelming claim (by 90 per cent of respondents) that advertising did not influence the way they voted. Everyone always claims

that advertising does not influence the products they buy. Given this negative attitude to advertising, it comes as no surprise that 68 per cent thought there was too much advertising for political parties in this year's elections — 71 per cent of Labour voters and 70 per cent of Alliance voters bore this complaint (as opposed to 59 per cent of Tories).

If political advertising is such a bane to our lives, should it be banned? Only 21 per cent believe it should be. I doubt the figure would remain as low for opinion polls. ■

The survey was carried out by Mass-Observation among a quota sample of 991 people who voted in 40 constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland. The face-to-face interviews were conducted on 13 June 1987

