



John Major and Gordon Brown: bullied by the media?

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 Former top Tory Lord Fowler is about to publish [A Political Suicide](#) about how the Tories lost power and entered the political wilderness. His timing is superb for many reasons. Partly because they are about to get back in to power. And also because Labour might learn something from the story.


We met as he chaired a [panel](#) where I was banging on about the crisis facing journalism and politics. I made the BBC's 1992 election documentary which narrated how John Major managed to pull off an amazing political coup by winning against all the odds against Neil Kinnock's resurgent Labour Party. Lord Fowler was a leading Tory at the time.

 I suggested to him that both Major and Gordon Brown have been subjected to now universal contempt on the part of the news media. Back in the early 90s Major was portrayed routinely in all sections of the press as weak, boring, incompetent and shallow.

Gordon now has a similar problem. One senior international political correspondent told me yesterday about how profoundly disturbed she is by the way that the Westminster media mob has turned upon Gordon. She witnessed one airplane press trip where correspondents were rude to his face. They even complained that Brown spent too much time talking to them. Can you imagine? journalists who don't want to spend time talking to the Prime Minister?

All is lost?

The point is that he has lost all reputation with the Westminster Lobby. Norman Fowler agreed that Major did have a similar problem. But he pointed out that Major was seen as a new face so it took longer for the media to decide to take him apart. Major was Chancellor and Foreign Secretary before becoming PM but it happened so quickly that he left virtually no trace. When he went in to Number 10 it was as if a new party had taken power. Norman felt Gordon has bigger problems.

 Poor old Gordon has been around for a decade so his honeymoon with the media was very brief and never really struck a deep chord with the public. It does not feel like a new government. In the end John Major had enough support in the Conservative press, a brilliant election campaign and the guts to put himself in the front line. He may have been grey but I watched Major in action and he was impressive. We journalists laughed but the voters liked him. He was unpretentious and a pretty good communicator.

I am told that Gordon can charm people in private, but his real task is to do a Major and win over people in public.

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