

Polis – Major on the Media

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All politicians end up hating the media and most of them end up blaming them, too. [Sir John Major](#) was in [conversation](#) with my former political editor [Elinor Goodman](#) at the [LSE](#) last night and he spent a very enjoyable evening teasing Gordon Brown and justifying his own legacy as Prime Minister. He also took time to complain that, as a centrist Conservative politician, he had no natural supporters in the news media. Indeed, at the time it was largely divided between rabid neo-Conservative Euro-sceptics such as Murdoch's Sun and anti-Tory lefties like the Guardian or Mirror (and BBC – only kidding). So Sir John put a lot of his problems (and he had a lot during his seven year term) down to the fact that he didn't have a media mouthpiece to use to appeal directly to the British public. I produced the 1992 election documentary for the BBC so I spent a lot of time trailing around after Mr Major on the campaign trail. During that election everyone thought Major was going to lose. Conservative MPs and campaigners would cheerfully tell you that they were going to get thrashed by Neil Kinnock's New Labour Party with its lovely new Rose symbol. The only people who kept saying that the Tories were going to win were Party Chairman Chris Patten and their campaign communications chief, one Shaun Woodward. He's the millionaire turncoat who is now a Labour minister. My point is that the media didn't have to invent opposition to Mr Major among his own ranks. The media didn't struggle to find Tories who would rubbish their own leader and his policies. You couldn't move in Westminster without bumping in to a Conservative desperate to go on-screen to decry Major's pro-European, pro-welfare policies. They were simply reflecting deep and angry divisions within the Conservatives that Major's reasonable and centrist politics was unable to heal.

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