

Polis – Fight! Fight!

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Does the Labour Party, the public or the media want someone substantial to stand against Gordon Brown when Tony Blair leaves Downing Street this summer? Today's [moves](#) to stir the pot may do little more than confirm that Big Gordon is the only credible candidate for Prime Minister. But it also raises the question of who wants a proper competitive contest. It would be strange if it was the People's Party that had a less democratic succession than the Tories. The clash between Cameron and Davies was a genuine context with real differences in style and policy. The debate and the clear result strengthened the Conservative Party and its standing with voters. But can Labour pull off the same trick and revive Gordon's dismal [poll ratings](#)?

Here at [Media and Communications at the LSE](#) we are fortunate to have visiting lecturer [Philip Gould](#), the political advisor and pollster for the Labour Party. His students are benefitting from the experience and insight of one of the great political campaigners of the late 20th century. But are the lessons of the past applicable here?

We have always been told that the public don't like division within parties, hence New Labour's early control freak tendencies. But I actually think that the voters would like to see Gordon having to earn the Premiership by conducting a proper fight with some of his colleagues.

I think that the Labour Party also wants to have a real choice. That's partly because some people want Gordon to lose. They are either bitter Blairites or they think he just doesn't have what it takes to win against youthful, emollient Cameron.

But there is a third group who technically have no official say in this, and that is, of course, the Media. Political correspondents are already bored of Honest Dave. They fear that Grumpy Gordon will be both dull and a loser. What more fun could be had than to encourage a proper leadership election? It's a bit like kids in the playground standing around shouting "beef, beef" at some sullen but fight-shy classmates. In this case, I believe that the Westminster pack's appetite for conflict is exactly what the Labour party and the country needs.

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