

# Spinning out of control

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It is instructive to see the name Sion Simon MP at the heart of the current plot to unseat the Prime Minister. Not just because he is a former Blair loyalist but also because of his former role as a spin doctor. Those who thrive by spin, die by it, too. Nothing factual has changed as far as I can see in the last month. The economy, Iraq, even the poll ratings haven't really altered to such a degree that makes Tony Blair's departure *imperative* now when a few weeks ago it was merely *desirable* on the part of the rebels. But party politics has its own internal dynamics. After their holidays Labour MPs seem to be refreshed with a sense of daring, inspired by their vacations, their constituents and, no doubt, by impatient Brownites.

And this is where the political media comes in. Once you create a momentum in the news vacuum that is early September you have an unstoppable force. Once Political correspondents scent blood then the story has to escalate as rival journalists seek whatever edge they can. And in this case there is little difficulty in helping to release the simmering antagonisms that have festered for ten years. But it does help to orchestrate a sense of drama.

In today's 24/7 rolling news world that means dripping a succession of never-before-heard-of MPs who resign from almost meaningless 'government' posts through the TV and radio studios. Watching and reading the media yesterday from the beginning of the Today programme to the close of Newsnight gave a sense of sand running through fingers, of water seeping through cracks, of a career spinning out of control. No offence to the rebels but it reminded me of when the Orcs finally overrun the walls of the fortress in the Lord of the Rings movie. And the problem for Tony Blair is that it is very difficult to turn that kind of blood-thirsty tide around without the help of a Gandalf. I'm not sure if even the wizardry of Alistair Campbell – who would never have tolerated the current lack of grip and control – would make a difference now.

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