

APG Awards chairman Guy Murphy on what made the contenders stand out from the pack

● Feature, page 20

# CLOSE-UP 3

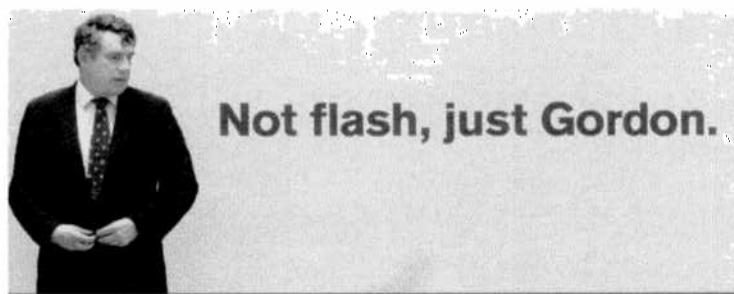
## Can advertising help re-elect Labour?

Relying on advertising alone is usually not enough to win a General Election. By Claire Billings

Given that, on the last day of the Labour Party conference, the Conservatives had a 14-point lead in the polls over the Government, the short answer to the question "can advertising save Labour?" would likely be a resounding "no".

Labour has been in power for 12 years. If you believe that governments have a limited lifespan, then add into the mix Gordon Brown's decreasing popularity, some bad press and the news last week that *The Sun* is backing the opposition, you'd probably bet Labour will lose next year's General Election.

Against this backdrop, what can advertising do? Kate Stanners, the creative partner at Labour's ad agency, Saatchi & Saatchi, says: "Today more than ever, advertising alone cannot win anything. The noun is wrong; if in doubt, see the Obama campaign. Can an agency



Labour... Saatchi has a tough job promoting Gordon Brown and his party

help? Yes. We can help shine a light on the man, the party and its policies, which, in turn, helps people decide and helps them ask the right questions."

Previously, two of the most successful political campaigns were 1978's "Labour isn't working" and 1992's "tax bombshell" for the

Conservatives, in which the Tories' then ad agency, Saatchi, calculated that Labour's spending plans would cost each taxpayer £1,250.

Bill Muirhead, a partner at M&C Saatchi and someone who worked on the "tax bombshell" campaign, comments: "All the do-gooders say why don't they say what they

are going to do instead of attacking the opposition, but the reason for this is that it does not work."

Chick Smith Trott's creative director, Dave Trott, worked with Tim Delaney voluntarily on Labour's advertising when James Callaghan was the prime minister. He says that Delaney produced a poster that showed a candle and asked the public to remember what it was like under the Tories during the black-out. "Callaghan wouldn't run it," Trott says, and he lost.

Trott believes that advertising could save Labour, but only if the public thought David Cameron was riskier than Brown.

"If there is one chance to win, it is to make the alternative seem a lot worse," he says.

### Got a view?

E-mail us at [campaign@haymarket.com](mailto:campaign@haymarket.com)

### THE HOT SEAT



Name Nick Fox

Job Chief operating officer, DDB

**You've got five hours left before the world explodes.**

**What do you do?**

Tell her I love her.

**What's your best joke?**

Gordon Brown selling all our gold for \$287 per ounce. It's now hovering around \$910.

**What's your biggest fear?**

Gordon staying on.

**When did you last cry and why?**

(See best joke.)

**Who is your hero?**

Paul Austin, for keeping our lift going through the recession, fearlessly.

**Name one thing about yourself that few people know.**

I've been writing ads for quite a while now.

**What's the worst thing about your job?**

Jeremy Craigen [the executive creative director at DDB] refuses to read them.

**What do you see when you look in the mirror?**

A god.

**Which historical figure do you most identify with and why?**

God, the god.

**If you had a trained monkey, what would you make it do?**

Present my ads to Jeremy Craigen.

**If your office was burning down, what object would you save and why?**

Paul Austin. We would need his help with the new lift in the new building.

**Are you happy?**

Not entirely, no.

**What would you do if you were invisible for the day?**

(Deleted by HR)

**What's your most evocative childhood memory?**

A bunch of hippies on a hill selling me coke.

**What's your most irritating habit?**

Trying to be a god.

**What belief do you hold most strongly?**

Advertising is the best job in the world.

**What's on your iPod most-played list?**

"I'd like to teach the world to sing..."

**What do you wear in bed?**

My iPod.

### Partner



Bill Muirhead, partner, M&C Saatchi

"There isn't an ad in the world that can save Labour now, so if I were them I'd sow the seeds for the election after the next one.

"If Gordon Brown was the leader, I would do something that said 'I may be wrong' and then list a number of things that would happen in a Conservative government, such as: 'I may be wrong, but under the Tories there will be more unemployment and remember what it was like under Thatcher.'

"In the run-up to this election, Labour needs to be much more honest and humble and *mea culpa*. There's a part of me that wishes they would come out and put their hands up. You sense they're trying to do that, but they can't quite get there. I suppose they need to be less arrogant. There's not much they can do because the problems they have will be in the ranks as all the knives come out.

"If Brown can hold the party and the cabinet together, that will be an achievement. But whether he can or not, I don't know."

### Former chairman



Sir Chris Powell, former chairman, BMP DDB

"The Tories' 'tax bombshell' ad in 1992 was clever, but to do that type of ad the other side has to do something wrong and you have to have the wit to spot it.

"The problem with trying to copy it is that it's unlikely that the Conservatives will make the same mistake. You have to have the evidence and provided they stay vague, you can't pin anything down. If a TV debate got going, you could get the impression that Cameron doesn't know what he's talking about or that he's really rather good at endearing himself to people and that Brown just isn't.

"But you can't do it just with advertising—you can only do it with a great strategy that advertising gave expression to.

"The Tories' 'demon eyes' ad didn't do any good because obviously Blair isn't the devil. It was a jolly good ad but it didn't have any effect.

"You need a good strategy based on some truth with some great ads to get it across, but you'll never do it just with ads."

### Chief strategy officer



Giles Hedger, chief strategy officer, Leo Burnett

"Advertising can lengthen the public memory and pull away from day-to-day electioneering tactics. They could get the public to think about the state the nation was in in 1997 and how different the world was before New Labour.

"For a lot of people, this will slow down the assumptions they are beginning to make about Labour. By implication, you build in the public's mind the risk of going back to the bad old days of the Tories.

"They'll want to move the debate away from Gordon Brown being an unelected prime minister and towards the Conservatives as an untested cabinet, and this is no moment for a 'suck it and see' decision because look at what's at stake.

"Advertising could put pressure on whether the Tories actually have any answers or not. On a daily basis ads could encourage us to ask ourselves what they mean. They have no level of detail because they haven't been in power for so long and ads could whip us up into that state of wanting the Tories to explain what they mean."

### Founder



Robert Campbell, founder, Campbell Luce Beta

"They should turn themselves green and say if we don't do something about the environment, our children will die. It might not save the election but at least they'd go down in a blaze of glory.

"They could turn themselves into the party that represents the interests of the half of the population who are over the age of 45. It's not about party politics anymore.

"Could I save Gordon Brown with a poster? Not in a million years. I only wish I was that good and advertising was that powerful. The Labour Party possibly, but they would have to change so extraordinarily and come up with such a compelling vision.

"There has to be some meaning, truth and promise behind what it's doing and I don't think the Tories are in much better shape.

"If the ad agency came up with something, Labour would have to back it up, but they are pathetically short-termist. I think if they came up with a good product we could sell it, but they've failed to do that."