

FROM: Bill Davis

24th August 1986

As you know, all good speeches appeal to the heart as well as the mind.

To achieve this, they must be sincere and they must have the virtue of simplicity. Many speeches fail because, though worthy, they are so dull and complex that they fail to make the desired impact. Few people bother to quote them; even fewer bother to remember them.

Ronald Reagan's great strength is that he talks in language people can understand. There are countless other examples, throughout history, starting with the Ten Commandments.

the
I believe that the recent press coverage of/Conservative party's concern with its image (and yours) have been damaging. All the talk of advertising agencies and campaigns gives the impression that you and your colleagues are cynically trying to manipulate public opinion. I strongly urge you to put a stop to it.

You don't need gimmicks and slick slesmen. What you need, I submit, is a strong restatement of your philosophy and your vision of the country's future. It will encourage the troops and restore the feeling - which helped you so greatly in the last two elections - that you have a clear sense of direction.

Like it or not, our own elections have become more and more presidential. The perception of the party leader's personality and attitudes is, as you know, of crucial importance.

Inevitably, a Prime Minister comes under heavy fire after a long spell in office. Exactly the same happened to Harold Wilson and others. Boredom is one reason. The media's tendency to blame the Prime Minister for everything that goes wrong (and fail to give credit for what goes right) is another.

We do not need a new Margaret Thatcher. What we need, I suggest, is a better understanding of the one we've got.

You have always been - to quote your own phrase - a "conviction politician". It helped you greatly in the last two elections. People may not love strong leaders, but they respect them. This is why David Owen is so well regarded - he is thought to have the right leadership qualities. (David Steel is perceived as rather weak, and there are still serious doubts about Neil Kinnock).

People still praise your own leadership qualities. But constant propaganda by your opponents has tried (with some success) to create the impression that you are intolerant, inflexible, patronising, divisive, uncaring. We know better than that, of course, but it clearly has to be taken seriously.

M/F

Bill Davis /2

Television is still by far the most effective medium for countering these charges. I would like to offer the following suggestions:

1) It would be helpful if you could be seen, on television, discussing basic policies with "ordinary people". This would help to dispel the widely held notion that you are "out of touch". (Even Mr. Gorbachov nowadays makes a point of being seen with workers).

2) It would be helpful if you could be seen more often in situations which show that you do care about the less fortunate members of society - i.e., people in hospital, the unemployed and so on.

3) It would be helpful if, in national and local television interviews, you could bring your philosophy into sharper focus. As you know, most people can absorb only one message at a time, and they get turned off by any sort of jargon. Television interviews present an excellent opportunity to answer the key charges made by your opponents. You would do this in an election campaign; I suggest it is not too soon to start doing so now.

4) It would be helpful if you could work a little more humour into your interviews and speeches. As Churchill, Jack Kennedy and others proved, humour can be a powerful political weapon: it also helps to make a leader more human, more likeable. You are fortunate, I think, that Neil Kinnock is not better at this.

Perhaps the most damaging accusation of all is that you are "uncaring". The Sunday Times, in its disgraceful story purporting to give the Queen's views, made much play of this word. It is, of course, nonsense and I think it would be useful if you were to meet the charge head on, either in a television interview or in a major speech, or both. I have taken the liberty of putting together a first draft of such a speech; I believe that, if delivered by you with your usual passion, it would make a considerable impact.