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## **PARTY POLITICAL BROADCASTS IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE**

The future role and effectiveness of party political broadcasts (PPB) will be debated at this event marking 75 years since the British political parties first used PPBs to reach out to voters and follows the screening of a film to mark the occasion.

The film, produced by former ITN journalist David Walter and commissioned by Hanover Communications, uses rarely seen footage from the BFI National Archive, including a Churchill screen test and some classics from the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

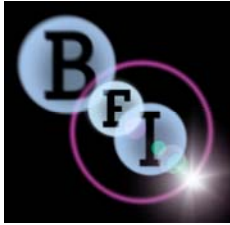
Walter interviewed Lord Heseltine, Charles Kennedy and Lord Kinnock, who himself was the subject of a ground-breaking Hugh Hudson PPB in 1987. Kinnock admitted that the Hudson biopic played a crucial role in the party's fortunes at the time in "ensuring that we came second rather than third in the general election... which was really the basic objective."

Lord Heseltine, who was closely involved in PPB planning in the general elections of 1992 and 1997, argued that PPBs "may create quite strong reactions amongst your own supporters... but I doubt if they change many people minds."

Charles Kennedy, who recalls with incomprehension an SDP broadcast that fixated on by-election victor Rosie Barnes stroking a rabbit, also questions the value of PPBs in the fast-moving new media age: "The minute something happens there's got to be an instantaneous reaction...that's not healthy for a proper politics in my view. Eventually it's a monster... you feed it and you feed it and you never satisfy its hunger and one day it eats you up. That's what happens to politicians."

The film also includes:

- Labour MP Bessie Braddock's appeal (1959) to the hard-working housewives of the day, when 'surprised' while doing the vacuum-cleaning by a camera crew;
  - a stately Sir Hartley Shawcross' (1951) arguing that the "well-educated, well-dressed, and well-off" can vote Labour;
  - John Cleese apologising for boring the viewer with his explanation of Proportional Representation on behalf of the SDP Liberal Alliance (1997);
  - previously unseen footage from a highly negative PPB about Blair and Mandelson, vetoed for broadcast by John Major in the 1997 campaign.
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The screening at BFI Southbank, before an invited audience of leading figures from media and politics, will be followed by a panel discussion with *Times* journalist Danny Finkelstein, advertising guru Chris Powell and David Walter.

Amanda Nevill, Director of the BFI, said: “The broadcasts featured in this film brilliantly show how class attitudes have changed over the decades. The production quality or content of many of them may seem quirky to us now but they had a serious message in their day. Like the many other thousands of films and television programmes in the BFI collection, they help paint a vivid picture of life in Britain for generation after generation.”

Charles Lewington, Managing Director of Hanover Communications, said: “The film questions whether party election broadcasts do anything more than reinforce the existing prejudices of voters rather than changing the opinion of the undecided. Today’s generation now get their information from so many different sources – increasingly online – you wonder what the role of the traditional PPB will be in future.”

For more information and copies of the PPB film (in aid of Dimpleby Care Cancer) visit [www.hanovercomms.com](http://www.hanovercomms.com).

For media queries please contact Neil Lindsay or Mark Saxon at **hanover** on 0207 400 4480.

#### Notes to Editors:

1. The British Film Institute (BFI) promotes understanding and appreciation of Britain's rich film and television heritage and culture. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire everyone. For more information on the BFI visit [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)
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