

Your Britain

In the early twentieth century, new mass media—popular newspapers, radio, film—exploded at the same time that millions of Britons received the vote in the franchise expansions of 1918 and 1928. The growing centrality of the commercial media to democratic life quickly became evident as organizations of all stripes saw its potential to reach new voters. The new media presented both an exciting opportunity and a significant challenge to the new Labour Party. Laura Beers traces Labour's rise as a movement for working-class men to its transformation into a national party that won a landslide victory in 1945. Key to its success was a skillful media strategy designed to win over a broad, diverse coalition of supporters. Though some in the movement harbored reservations about a socialist party making use of the "capitalist" commercial media, others advocated using the media to hammer home the message that Labour represented not only its traditional base but also women, office workers, and professionals. Labour's national leadership played a pivotal role in the effective use of popular journalism, the BBC, and film to communicate its message to the public. In the process Labour transformed not only its own national profile but also the political process in general. New Labour's electoral success of the late twentieth century was due in no small part to its grasp of media communication. This insightful book reminds us that the importance of the mass media to Labour's political fortunes is by no means a modern phenomenon.

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