and too ‘posh’. Thatcher had also been an unpopular education secretary in the early 1970s. Some members of the electorate may also have been reluctant to vote for a female prime minister.

‘Thatcher factor’ her gender and personality would cause voter resentment. Significant as potential voters put off from voting for the Conservatives, saw her as less experienced and in touch with ordinary people and more extreme and condescending.

Focused so heavily on the two major party leaders that it set the trend by which future general elections would be judged as presidential style contests rather than a choice between parties.

**Impact of the campaign**

Labour focused on its ability to deal with trade unions and adopted a moderate financial course. Labour ran a poor election campaign, implying that the country should not elect a woman.

The Conservatives focused on ‘Labour isn’t working’, proposed the right to buy scheme in housing and promised tax cuts.

Both parties deliberately kept the radical wings of the parties silent. The campaign focused on the centre ground of politics, offering little real distinction other than the style of leadership. The fight for the middle ground offered little effective choice.

**Impact of the media**

For the first time mass media played a prominent role in the campaigns.

Press conferences were timed to provide stories for the midday news. Afternoon walkabouts by leaders were designed to coincide with the early evening news. Major speeches were timed to catch the evening news.

Broadcast media focused on the personalities and attitudes of the two main leaders.

Opinion polls showed the closing gap between the two parties, helping to boost turnout for the Conservative and encouraged Labour supporters.

The focus on the media set the standard for future elections.

1997

**Outcome**

Labour: 418 seats won, 43.2% votes won.

Conservative: 165 seats won, 30.7% votes won.

Massive defeat for the Conservatives, one from which it took over 10 years for the party to recover. Labour was to stay in power for the next 13 years. It was the last general election to be totally dominated by the two main parties.

It was a landslide victory for the Labour party under Blair. The effects of the electoral system exaggerated the scale of Labour’s victory – 43% of the vote was converted into 63% of the seats.

The Liberal Democrats made a breakthrough, winning 46 seats at Westminster.