The Study of the Mass Media

Newspapers

The aim of this study is to learn how people evaluate and understand different mass media. We are particularly interested in ‘selective perception’: how far young people and older people, or women and men, use different mass media.

The study has three stages. First it would be appreciated if you would complete a short questionnaire. Then you are asked to read for about 30 minutes some of the typical stories selected here from newspapers. Just look through the stories that most interest you just like you would read your own newspaper. Lastly we will ask you to complete a second brief questionnaire. The entire process should take about an hour.

Many thanks for your help and cooperation with this study.

David Sanders
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AUSTRALIAN SCIENTISTS have an explanation for the surge of asthma attacks, chest pains and wheezing that accompany summer thunderstorms. A study led by Dr Guy Marks of the Sydney Institute of Respiratory Medicine, found that a sudden rush of cold air, probably with a high pollen count, triggers the attacks.

Dr Marks began investigating after a severe storm over Wagga Wagga, south-east Australia, in 1997 led to 215 people being taken to hospital with symptoms of asthma. An association between thunderstorms and asthmatic wheezing has long been recognised, but scientists have not understood the reason.

Dr Marks's team discovered that a downdraught of cold air in the storm sweeps up pollen grains and particles and concentrates them in a shallow band of air at ground level.

It has happened in Britain. In 1994, an hour after a severe thunderstorm over London, 640 people were admitted to hospital with symptoms of asthma, six times the average attendance. About one in six children and one adult in 14 have asthma, which is increasing rapidly.
TWO PEOPLE, one a pregnant woman, have died in east Delhi and more than 30 have suffered injuries after police in the Indian capital were bombarded with reports of attacks by a mysterious "monkey man". The attacker, often but not always described as about 5ft tall, wearing a mask and with metallic claws, has been preying on residents of the slums and working-class districts in the east of the city for more than two weeks.

In the heat of the summer, when temperatures even at night are in excess of 37C, many people in Delhi seek what relief they can get by sleeping on the flat roofs of their homes. The poor districts also suffer long power cuts, and the attacker or attackers have taken advantage of this to terrify his victims.

A 35-year-old man from Arvind Nagar said: "A strange growling noise woke me at 1am. I could make out the hazy outline of a creature sitting on the roof. He leapt at me and ripped me with his steel claws."

More than two dozen people have scratch marks to show for such encounters, but the rumours of attacks have caused at least as much harm, with terrified citizens hurling themselves from roofs and terraces as the cry of "monkey man!" resounds across the rooftops.

A pregnant 27-year-old woman, identified only as Suman, was sleeping on her terrace when she was woken by the cries of her neighbours. In her haste to flee she fell down the stairs and died in hospital of her injuries.

One man has also been reported as dying from wounds inflicted by the creature to his face, neck and abdomen, but details are sketchy. Suresh Roy, joint commissioner of police, said: "We have consulted doctors about the bites and they said they were by some animal. The information we have points towards an animal. But we checked with the zoo and they said no animal had escaped."

Prakash Chand, 37, an industrial worker, said he was unsure if it was a man or a monkey that attacked him on Monday night.

"I was sleeping on our terrace and woke up when I heard this strange growling sound," he said. "It was about 4 or 5ft tall, very well built and whacked me hard on my arm."

Angry mobs armed with sticks have taken to the darkened streets in search of the assailant. A garage mechanic dressed all in black was seized and beaten in error by one mob, while in wasteland in the suburb of Noida another crowd grabbed a man "performing mystical formulations" involving hunks of goat meat and beat him before handing him over to police. He turned out to be a harmless tantrik or wizard, trying to help a truck owner recover his stolen property.

Delhi police have issued several portraits of the monkey man, but reports of the creature's appearance have varied so wildly that for once they can hardly be blamed for the epithet "clueless" usually attached to them.

The assailant has been described as being as small as a cat, 4ft 6ins, over 7ft, possessing a halo, resembling an alien, wearing "a green belt with buttons", having springs or rollerskates on its feet, jumping 30 feet at one bound, having a bald or hairy head and being covered either with shaggy black hair or feathers.

Given the strange mental state brought on by the unrelenting intense heat and long and unpredictable power and water cuts, it is not impossible that the whole thing has been brought on by a few actual monkey attacks - monkeys being a chronic menace in Delhi - and all the rest being the product of collective hysteria. At the very least it helps take people's minds off the weather.

GRAPHIC: An artist's impression of two versions of the 'monkey man', said to be terrorising Delhi by night.
ONLY WEEKS after Michael Jackson's appearance, dressed as a Tenniel playing -card, to lecture 300 students on successful child management, the debating chamber of the Oxford Union hosted another unusual bit of self-revelation yesterday afternoon - a meeting with Hugh Hefner.

The founder and editor-in-chief of Playboy, the most significant men's magazine of the 20th century, the legendary stud, philosopher, cartoonist, party-giver, connoisseur of the female form divine, septuagenarian, Viagra fan, bon viveur and the world's most unreconstructed male chauvinist, appeared in front of a packed chamber under the disapproving busts of Gladstone, Asquith, Lord Salisbury and Macmillan but beside the considerably more sympathetic bust of Ruby Wax, the TV comedienne and dangerous interviewer.

Massive cheering greeted Mr Hefner's entrance, from undergraduates for whom Playboy must seem a curiously old-fashioned entertainment for pipe-smoking old saddies.

Mr Hefner (who flew in from Munich this morning with his entourage of seven girlfriends) was kitted out not in a Chinese silk dressing-gown but in a cool, baggy olive suit and orange shirt open to the mid-sternum (no medallion). He is surprisingly short - barely an inch taller than the pocket-Venus Ms Wax - but looked fit and healthy, smiled his mile-wide, crocodile smile and waved and blew kisses at an audience old enough to be his teenage grandchildren.

Revelations flew. About how close Playboy came to being called Stag Night (I guess the girls would have worn antlers) but ran foul of the existing Stag magazine. How things had panned out with Sandy, Mandy and Brandy, three sisters whose company he enjoyed as a kind of matching set. How nobody, repeat nobody had to sleep with him to get a staple through her navel in the pages of Playboy. How pleased he was to find, when his second marriage ended in 1995, that there was "a whole new generation (of girls) who wanted me to come out and play" and that, coincidentally, just that month, Pfizer invented something called Viagra - "the best recreational drug on the market". How the first thing he looks at when he meets a woman is her eyes. (Nobody asked about the second and third things.) No technically minded biologists inquired how exactly it worked, having seven girlfriends.

Behind the image of the sophisticated, tuxedoed Playboy bunny lay a mawkish story: "When I was young I had a security blanket and a pet dog. The dog got sick and died and the blanket had to be burned, so I guess I was trying to recreate the image of security in the bunny. It was a Citizen Kane/Rosebud thing." Hefner explained how his life of hectic seduction and 24-hour hedonism was a response to his Nebraska childhood, where there was "little display of affection" and he escaped into "dreams and fantasy, fed on movies like Casablanca and classic musicals". Dennis Potter's Pennies from Heaven had, it seems, a profound effect on him, as a mirror of his desperate idealism. What all this had to do with pictures of naked women was unclear, though he insisted that "repression and censorship reminded me of my home". "Maybe you were overcompensating" said Ruby Wax, kindly.

Several students asked for invitations to the Playboy Mansion ("Do you have someone to cut your lawns and, especially, to clean your pool?" asked one, "and can I apply?") but none of the girls seemed keen to be Miss May. They regarded him perhaps as a funny old uncle, fantastically pleased with himself ("When I die I want to be born again as me") and convinced that every woman in the world wants to sleep with him. All he wanted, he told them, was "thirty years more of the same".
Oxford is the final destination on a gruelling four-city tour of Europe to celebrate his 75th birthday. On the day itself, 9 May, he was in Milan at a party for more than 2,000 guests at La Atlantica, hosted by the fashion designer Elio Fiorucci. Two days later he was in Cannes boogieing on his yacht, at another party with a giant exploding cake and the rock god Lennie Kravitz.

Monday found him in Munich, being mobbed at the airport and interviewed for five hours by journalists anxious to hear the Playboy philosophy for the new millennium, then at a party to launch the German Playmate of the Year. "He went to bed at three this morning," muttered a hollow-eyed aide. "I can't take much more of this."

Job done, Hef applauded his audience and departed for tea at the Randolph Hotel, thence to Oxford airport to fly his executive chopper to Battersea heliport and link up with Tina, Regina, Kimberly, Tiffany, Stephanie, Michelle and Dalene. They had been shopping and having beauty treatments; soon they would be reunited. "Harmony is one of the things I stress in the relationship," he told his slightly stunned Oxford audience. "They're faithful to it, and so am I."

GRAPHIC: Viagra fan Hugh Hefner with Ruby Wax, in kindly mood, preparing for their appearance at the Oxford Union. Andrew Fox
The head of state ought to be a person who reflects Canadian diversity, and is chosen by Canadians, the minister said. "Having the oldest son inherit the responsibility of being head of state is just not something in the 21st century we ought to be entertaining." There was a groundswell of discontent that new Canadian citizens must attend a citizenship ceremony where they swear "to bear true allegiance, to her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, queen of Canada, and her heirs and successors".

The office of the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chretien, later said Mr Manley's views were not government policy. As the controversy grew, Mr Manley joked that the Queen's career could well be longer than his own. But he said he had no regrets about his remarks.

Yesterday, Buckingham Palace seemed unmoved by Mr Manley's outburst. "I would say that this is a matter for the Canadian government," sniffed a spokeswoman for the Queen.
Marks & Spencer is considering moving its head office to Milton Keynes in order to cut costs and underline the radical cultural shift under way within the ailing business.

Chairman Luc Vandevelde is understood to be determined to move the troubled store chain out of its central London head office in Baker Street, which accommodates 4,000 staff. The elderly building is famous for its miles of corridors, lined with offices decorated according to seniority.

Sources inside the company say Mr Vandevelde believes he can sweep away the "civil service" culture within the organization with a new location. Earlier this year the company was reported to be considering moving to Paddington, only a couple of miles from the current head office. But in recent weeks senior executives have looked at office space in Milton Keynes.

A company spokeswoman said M&S was considering a move but Milton Keynes was an unlikely destination because the company was keen to minimise disruption.

It is understood that an announcement could come as early as next week, when the company is due to announce its annual profits.

The figures will make grisly reading. Analysts are expecting full year profits of pounds 440m-465m. According to confidential internal management accounts seen by the Guardian earlier this year, the company's forecasts were for profit before tax and exceptional charges of pounds 472m and pretax profits of pounds 430m.

Last year the retailer made pounds 519 before tax and exceptionals, and pounds 418m before tax.

Yesterday M&S announced two appointments to strengthen its design team. Jeremy Armstrong, formerly head of creative trends at Debenhams, has been appointed head of menswear design and Barbara Calderwood has joined from the toymaker Hasbro as head of childrenswear design.

Mr Armstrong, who is not joining the company until the autumn, has a particularly difficult task. Menswear sales have collapsed further and faster than even the disastrous womenswear ranges.

At Debenhams he led a large creative team responsible for all aspects of design and internal brand management across men's, women's and children's clothing, lingerie, cosmetics and homewares. Before joining Debenhams he was a freelance menswear designer.

Another new menswear design appointment is Sherri Fried, who has worked for Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein.
CHARLES KENNEDY played down his party's commitment to joining the euro yesterday to focus on increasing public investment in health, education and pensions in the Liberal Democrats' tabloid-style manifesto.

The party leader made investment in public services the main thrust of his party's manifesto launch with plans for tax increases to pay for more nurses, teachers and police.

Mr Kennedy risked infuriating conservative family values campaigners by confirming plans to grant lesbian and gay couples full legal recognition so they can inherit property and access benefits now reserved for married couples.

Mr Kennedy announced tough plans to reform the penal system, with increased use of electronic tagging, reparation for victims, fines, drug treatment and probation orders as an alternative to prison.

The most dangerous violent criminals and sex offenders would have to stay in prison for life with a consultation on whether to introduce indefinite sentences and give the courts powers to decide whether they are a danger to society.

The manifesto elevates law and order to one of the main Liberal Democrat election issues, with plans to recruit an extra 6,000 policemen and to reinforce front-line police with a new part-time force made up of retired police officers and "suitable members of the public".

Mr Kennedy reiterated plans to raise the basic rate of income tax by 1p to pay for more teachers and classroom assistants and to cut class sizes.

But Labour said that "Liberal Democrat sums don't add up" and claimed the party would have to put up tax by the equivalent of 3p in the basic rate of income tax. Andrew Smith, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said: "Neither the Liberals nor the Tories can make their sums add up, and neither now can be trusted on the economy."

The Tories sharply criticised Mr Kennedy for playing down his party's enthusiasm for the Euro, which was mentioned on the last page of the manifesto and was accompanied by pledges to reform the EU and make the European Commission more "democratically accountable".

Francis Maude, the shadow Foreign Secretary, said the Liberal Democrats were afraid of alienating Eurosceptic voters in the South West. "This is deeply, deeply dishonest from a party that believes in scrapping the pound and taking Britain into a European superstate," he said.

The manifesto includes plans to give pounds 1,000 a year to nurses and other low-paid NHS staff to stop them leaving the health service. Taxpayers will be able to "tick a box" to decide whether up to 1 per cent of their income tax goes to health, increases in pensions, education or improving the environment.

Environmental policies are given priority in the manifesto with a pledge on Green Action on every page. But the Green Party criticised the Liberal Democrats for "superficial window dressing" and said there was nothing radical in their environmental proposals.

Charter 88 said it was pleased the Liberal Democrats had continued their commitment to constitutional reform but hoped it would be given an airing during the campaign.
THE CONSERVATIVE Party rejected claims that it was playing the race card yesterday as it put the sensitive issue of asylum-seekers at the heart of its general election campaign.

Undeterred by attacks from Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the United Nations, William Hague outlined a series of hardline measures to crack down on economic migrants and deter "bogus" claimants. The Tory leader risked further outrage by saying that the Government was responsible for the deaths of 58 Chinese illegal immigrants who suffocated in a lorry in Dover last year.

In a highly charged speech in Dover, Mr Hague declared that Britain had become the "asylum capital of Europe," and said it should be "a safe haven, not a soft touch". He said that the first act of a Tory government would be to set up reception centers to detain all asylum-seekers and their families on entry to the UK.

Mr Hague said he would also pass a new law to allow the immediate deportation of any asylum-seeker who had traveled through a "safe" country.

Ann Widdecombe, the shadow Home Secretary, said anyone claiming asylum on arrival from France would be sent straight back over the Channel.

The party would create "a presumption that a claim is unfounded" if the applicant enters the UK from any nation deemed "free from persecution". In other words, anyone not arriving directly from a dangerous country would be automatically judged "bogus".

Another key Tory policy is a "meet-the-plane" scheme in which immigration officers would target aircraft believed to be carrying "bogus" applicants. Miss Widdecombe said flights from India would be among those targeted.

Mr Hague said he would be ashamed to live in a Britain that closed its doors to genuine refugees but claimed that Labour's handling of asylum had put its status as a safe haven "under threat as never before". He said there was a "sustained and systematic abuse" of asylum laws, arguing that some of the strongest advocates of tough action were black and Asian immigrants who had "waited their turn".

Mr Hague claimed Britain's asylum controls had "broken down" and pointed to the doubling to 76,000 of those applying for asylum since 1997. He also pointed out that although nearly 80 per cent of cases were refused, only 9,000 people were deported last year.

In perhaps the most controversial section of his speech, Mr Hague said: "The real blame for this situation are those who have plunged the system into chaos in the first place. The longer the queue, the worse the administrative confusion, the greater the incentive is for racketeers to target their efforts on Britain. There is a direct link between Government incompetence in managing asylum cases and the surge in applications to stay here."

"Britain is the target of a miserable, violent and often tragic multi-billion pound international trade in asylum-seekers. No-one will forget the tragic scenes last summer when 58 Chinese men and women were found to have suffocated to death in the back of a container lorry en route from Zeebrugge to Dover. That's why we need a new approach," he said.

Mr Hague said it was "extraordinary" that Britain received asylum applications from countries with good human rights records and even candidates
for EU membership, in a reference to Romania and Poland.

Miss Widdecombe dismissed Labour complaints that her plans were not costed, stating that only 4,000 reception places were needed at one time. Although there were 71,000 applicants a year, many would be deterred by the new policy, she said. When asked how many centres would be needed, she said it would be "substantially more" than the four more suggested by the Government.

She refused to give a detailed figure for her plans but claimed that there would be no net cost because deterring unfounded claims would save: "Hundreds of millions of pounds."

In an attempt to rebut Labour claims that the plans were not costed, the Tories produced for the first time detailed figures on the proposed reception centres. While the cost of keeping an asylum-seeker at present is pounds 119 a week, the center would cost pounds 527 a week per adult. But the Conservatives claimed that they would need just 4,000 secure places and between eight and 12 of the centres for their plans at a running cost of pounds 80m per year and a capital cost of pounds 30m per year.

While the Government's current scheme of dispersal and voucher support costs pounds 130m a year, the Tory plans would cost pounds 110m a year; a net saving of pounds 20m, the Tories claim.

GRAPHIC: William Hague with his wife, Ffion, left, and the shadow Home Secretary, Ann Widdecombe, after his speech in Dover Geoff Caddick
WILLIAM HAGUE is preparing to launch a seven-day onslaught against Labour on the euro in spite of fears that a large Tory election defeat would damage a "No" campaign in any referendum.

The Conservative leader will use the final week of the election to count down the days until there are "just 24 hours left to save the pound".

Party strategists, who have identified Europe as the leading issue where Mr Hague has carved out a distinctive identity, are determined that he should "go for broke" at the end of the campaign.

They have planned a national day of protest and a massive leaflet drop, partly to ensure that the Tory campaign does not run out of steam in the run-up to polling day as it did in the 1997 election.

Anti-euro groups are worried that Mr Hague's expected defeat will "contaminate" their message if a referendum on the issue is called by the Government after the election.

Business for Sterling and New Europe, who will campaign for a "No" vote in a referendum, have said that they will not be dragged into the election by endorsing any of the political parties.

They have also warned the Tories that a "No" campaign must appear to be cross-party if it is going to win, not least because opposition to the euro in opinion polls remains twice as high as that for the Conservative Party.

One senior figure associated with the "No" campaign said: "This election is about many issues, not just the euro. If Hague tries to turn it into a referendum, he risks dragging us down with the Conservative Party."

Tony Blair yesterday reiterated that he would not seek to "bounce" the public into supporting the euro immediately after the election.

However, the Treasury will carry out an assessment early within the new Parliament on whether its "five tests" for British entry have been met, paving the way for a referendum which could be held this time next year.

Mr Hague, who has ruled out entry into the single currency for the lifetime of the next Parliament if the Tories win, will say the only way people can make sure the pound will not be scrapped is by voting Conservative.

He plans to spend the rest of this week talking about crime before moving on to asylum-seekers next week. Conservative strategists believe that a strong message on asylum will dovetail into Europe, the climax of their campaign, in which Mr Hague is expected to repeat his warning that a Labour second term will turn Britain into a "foreign land".
LEADING Liberal Democrat candidates have threatened legal action to silence any mention of their support for the single currency.

They include David Heath, the agriculture spokesman, who is defending a majority of 130 in Somerset and Frome, and Mike Hancock, the former MP for Portsmouth South.

Mr Heath and his colleagues voted for a motion calling for Britain to enter the euro during the previous Parliament. The Liberal Democrat manifesto argues for the abolition of the pound subject to a referendum and for a federal Europe.

Mr Heath, Mr Hancock and the Lib Dem candidate in Dorset West, Simon Green, have now sought to distance themselves from their leadership's stance on the euro.

Their actions follow a leaflet campaign from the Democracy Movement, a grassroots anti-euro organisation, which informed their constituents about the candidates' commitment to scrapping sterling.

Mr Hancock, who is defending a 4,000 majority in Portsmouth South, where Charles Kennedy opened the Liberal Democrat election campaign, sent a two-page solicitor's letter to the Democracy Movement after it distributed a leaflet headlined: "Local MP wants to scrap the pound."

The letter, from Saulet & Co solicitors in Portsmouth, said: "This is completely untrue. Mr Hancock is clearly on record in all his publicity and his correspondence making it clear he will not support the scrapping of the pound or joining the euro unless the British people vote for this in a properly held referendum. Therefore your handout is libellous."

"Our client requires immediate written assurance that you will print a full retraction."

Mr Green, who is standing in Dorset West against Oliver Letwin, a member of the shadow cabinet with a majority of 1,840, issued an ultimatum to the Democracy Movement not to publish any more material about his views on Europe. Mr Green wrote: "I am most definitely not in favour of a European superstate, or several other matters referred to in your publication."

Mr Heath told his local newspaper, the Western Gazette, that he was also considering action. "I am very upset with it because what it is putting out is an absolute untruth."

The Democracy Movement agreed to publish retractions if and when the Liberal Democrat candidates signed statements repudiating Liberal Democrat policy in favour of a federal Europe and pledging to vote for Britain to keep the pound "in all circumstances and at all times."

None of the three has taken up the challenge.
ALL babies would receive up to Pounds 500 from the State at birth to be invested for their future, under plans to be announced by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown today.

The money, which could be worth more than Pounds 2,000 by the time the child grows up, could then be spent on buying a first home, starting a family, job training or further education. It has yet to be decided whether the money should be made available when the child reaches 18 or 21.

Although similar initiatives are being tested in America, Britain would be the first country to adopt the idea of a universal "baby bond".

Relatives from poorer households would also be encouraged to swell the savings fund, with the Government matching extra money put into the accounts up to a certain limit each year.

The scheme, which would cost the Treasury several hundred million pounds a year, will be a key element of Labour's election manifesto, and the Prime Minister will say today that it will become a center-piece in the Government's efforts to abolish child poverty within a generation.

The maximum initial payment will, however, be less than the Pounds 1,000 policy think-tanks had pressed for, and it will be means-tested so that babies born into wealthier families receive only about half the amount invested for their less-well-off contemporaries.

Today's announcement will start a consultation exercise that would continue after the election if Labour were re-elected. Details to be published today will include a range of options in terms of household income thresholds and limits for extra contributions from both individuals and government.

The Institute for Public Policy Research, a centre-left think-tank, had originally suggested a flat Pounds 1,000 payment for all babies, but ministers have decided that a scale of payments depending on the family's income would fit in better with their overall approach to welfare provision - and cut the cost of the scheme.

Ruth Kelly, Labour MP for Bolton West and a key supporter of the scheme, said last night that it had not yet been decided whether the Government would put tight restrictions on how 18-year-olds could spend the money.

She told Newsnight: "There are arguments for quite tightly defining the areas in which people may be able to spend the money and there are arguments for saying that the 18-year-old is an adult and knows best how to use that money."

If restrictions were imposed they could accommodate a wide range of personal choice. "When you get to 18 whether you buy a house with your money or whether you buy education or want to start a family, I think these are things most people would relate to. I think we could easily have all of those in any criteria that were drawn up."

In another "family friendly" policy yesterday, the Government announced that it was extending the right to 13 weeks' unpaid leave to parents of all children under five. The benefit had previously applied only to those whose children were born after December 15, 1999.

The decision was welcomed by trade unions but attacked by employers, who said it would damage small firms and limit job creation.

Digby Jones, director-general of the CBI, said: "The cumulative effect of new employment rights is making smaller firms wonder whether it is really worth employing more people." It would also stiffen employers' resolve to resist moves to give mothers the right to work part-time.
GORDON Brown was forced to acknowledge yesterday that he might have to rein back on ambitious plans to boost spending on public services - the centrepiece of Labour's election campaign - half-way through the next Parliament.

While Labour claimed that the Tory promises to cut taxes by pounds 8 billion "did not add up", the Chancellor was challenged over a "black hole" in his own figures.

A fierce battle on tax and spending dominated the second full day of campaigning after the Tories put their pledge to cut duty on petrol and diesel by 6p a litre at the forefront of their plans to reduce taxation.

Labour was given a boost when the Bank of England cut interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point to 5.25 per cent. The main mortgage lenders said they would match the cut, taking rates to their lowest for 36 years.

The Conservatives stole a march on the other parties by becoming the first to publish their manifesto - Time for Common Sense. William Hague said it was the "most ambitious" produced by the party for a generation.

The Tory leader said it proposed "going further than any government before in handing back to individuals and families the power to shape their own lives and their own communities".

Labour mounted a determined effort to undermine Mr Hague's attempt to regain the Tories' traditional reputation as a tax-cutting party with promises to reduce taxes for savers, pensioners and families with young children, and to abolish the IR35 tax on information technology consultants.

Mr Brown claimed that the Tory tax cuts were "irresponsible" and would cost more than pounds 16 billion over the first three years - twice the figure in the Conservative manifesto.

He alleged that pounds 8 billion of savings that the Tories said they had identified did not stand up, and the party's plans could only be financed by big cuts in spending on public services or by higher borrowing.

The Conservatives turned the tables on Mr Brown by highlighting what they claimed was a "black hole" in his own spending plans.

The independent Institute of Fiscal Studies revealed on Wednesday that Mr Brown might have to raise taxes if he wanted to maintain the big boost to spending promised by Labour over the lifetime of the next Parliament.

It concluded that Mr Brown would be able to afford the 3.8 per cent annual increase in spending on public services over the next three years without raising taxes.

But if he wanted to maintain the same level of public spending growth in the last two years of the Parliament, taxes would have to be raised by some pounds 5 billion a year - equivalent to almost 2p on the basic rate of income tax.

The Chancellor was challenged yesterday on whether he would be prepared to raise taxes so that spending could continue at the increased rate throughout the parliament or would allow expenditure to level off after 2004.

Mr Brown said that Labour had not made any commitment to increase spending at the higher rate in 2004-5 and 2005-6. He said the estimates published at the time of the March Budget showed that spending was projected to grow at 2.5 per cent a year in line with growth in the
economy in those two years. He said a decision on whether to raise the projections would be taken next year.

The row was embarrassing for Mr Blair and Mr Brown, who have sought to make higher investment in public services the dividing line between Labour and the Tories. They have criticised the Conservatives for promising to hold public spending to the 2.5 per cent trend rate of growth in the economy.

Mr Brown yesterday refused to rule out further tax increases on business in the next parliament, although the manifesto is expected to reaffirm that Labour will not raise the basic or higher rates of income tax.

The Conservatives questioned how Mr Brown's admission that spending could be curtailed in three years' time squared with recent statements by Mr Blair that health, schools, transport and the police needed "five, six, seven, eight years of sustained extra investment".

The Tories accused Labour of "scare tactics" after Alistair Darling, the Social Security Secretary, announced that he would be writing to pensioners claiming that Conservative plans for long-term pensions reform would lead to cuts in the basic pension.

[PS]News: [ES]
A 100-YEAR-OLD man has been arrested for attacking his girlfriend after accusing her of paying too much attention to other men.

Hermenergildo Rojas poured petrol on 38-year-old Janet Ali in a Florida trailer park. She fled for her life, smashing a bedroom window and cutting herself as she clambered out of his mobile home. Rojas was arrested for aggravated battery.


Rojas - who is 5ft 5in tall - spent three days in jail when he was 98 after a dispute with a female bus driver. Police said he threatened her with a fake sub-machine gun.

Lt Angel Machado, a Miami fireman, said the relationship between Rojas and Ali had been "on-and-off" for about six years. She would go to his home "every time she needs a shower or a place to sleep".

She has several convictions, including cocaine possession. Rojas was released on $1,500 (pounds 1,050) bail and is due to appear in court on May 23. If he is convicted, he is likely to become the oldest prisoner in America.

The growing number of elderly inmates has led to the creation of special wings equipped with wheelchairs and zimmer frames. Geriatric prisoners even have their own lobby group - the Project for Older Prisoners, or Pops.
A PRODUCTION of Hamlet which opened at the Schauspielhaus theatre in Zurich last night has provoked controversy over the casting of seven former neo-Nazis in minor roles.

Christoph Schlingensief, 40, who has earned a reputation as one of Germany's most provocative directors for productions involving asylum seekers and the disabled, said he wanted to help reintegrate repentant neo-Nazis into society by casting them as clowns.

His casting in a rock-music version of the play was in part inspired by an initiative by the German Interior Minister, Otto Schily.

Mr Schily's programme, Aus, (Out), aims to help repentant neo-Nazi youths to overcome peer pressure and leave the far Right.

The cast says the neo-Nazis are comic figures, as if to mock their former selves, but there are some who say the performance has given them a platform.

The production has been criticised by Swiss and German newspapers and one actor's life threatened.

A spokesman for the show said: "We are very concerned about these threats, but the show must go on."

[PS]News: [ES]
WHEN a violent prisoner leapt from the dock on to his bench yesterday, a 65-year-old Crown Court judge faced up to him and said coolly: "I'm not scared of you, sonny."

As court officials and lawyers scrambled to his aid, Judge John Hopkin, his wig askew, stood his ground until security staff took away 20-year-old Damien Small.

The incident happened after the 5ft 6in judge, resplendent in his red robes, had sentenced Small to three years in a young offenders' institution.

Small, who seemed placid as he was sentenced, suddenly vaulted the dock and crossed the court by walking over barristers' tables, scattering briefs and knocking over glasses of water.

Reaching the foot of the judge's dais, he dodged around a startled woman clerk, leapt the railing and, on landing beside Judge Hopkin, told him: "Now you know what it's like to be scared." Witnesses said that, far from being scared, or even perturbed, the judge stood up, eyed Small calmly and delivered his verbal put-down.

Rita Smith, 50, a member of the court staff in Nottingham, said: "It all happened in a split second. The man leapt out of the dock and over the desk-tops in three or four strides. "Then they were struggling behind the bench. The defendant was giving him verbal abuse but the judge said he wasn't frightened."

A barrister, William Everard, went to the judge's aid. Shortly afterwards police arrived from a neighbouring court to take Small away. Mrs Smith said: "The judge was marvellous and never hesitated for a second."

After adjusting his wig, Judge Hopkin ordered that the man should not be charged over the incident.

Judge Hopkin said at his home last night: "I was a boxer in my school days and it is something that has proved very useful as it turned out. I became a judge in 1979 and I have had a few incidents, but no one has ever got so close to me before. It all happened so quickly and I did the best I could.

"I have to admit I was slightly uneasy but you don't think of that at the time. It's fair to say we had a very frank exchange of views'. He praised the people who had come to his aid, including one of the lawyers involved in the case. "Mr Everard acted with great speed," he said. "He was up at the bench in a flash. I have never seen him move so fast."

Small, from Sherwood, Nottingham, was taken off to serve his sentence for robbing a disabled man, Andrew Schasht, at a Nottingham night club. He was also convicted of affray.

Judge Hopkin, who lists his pastimes in Who's Who as fell-walking and climbing, is due to retire next year. His wife, Susan, said last night: "I am not surprised he did something. He was a very good rugby player in his day."

In January this year an Old Bailey judge was taken to hospital with facial injuries after an attack by a man standing trial for murder. A review of court security was ordered and there will be a separate review at Nottingham.

The Lord Chancellor's Department said last night: "After a stand-off lasting a few seconds between the judge and defendant the defendant was overpowered by dock officers. There was no physical contact."

LOAD-DATE: May 11, 2001
BBC Radio 3's attempt to attract a younger audience by playing world music, jazz and Frank Zappa has failed to impress listeners, audience figures show.

Despite BBC claims that listeners liked the station's campaign to shrug off its reputation for high-brow classical music, Radio 3's audience dropped slightly from nearly two million listeners in the three months up to December to 1.9 million in the period up to the end of March.

While Radio 1 also lost listeners, down from 10.7 million to 10.3 million, Radio 2 continues to be the BBC's great airwave success story, according to the figures released by RAJAR.

The station, which was named "Station of the Year" in the Sony Radio Awards last week, increased its audience slightly to 10.9 million.

Like Radio 3, it has invested in a broader range of music, with DJs such as Jonathan Ross challenging its old image as the home of easy listening.

Jim Moir, Radio 2's controller, said: "I'm delighted. It confirms that our star presenters, the music we play and the programmes we broadcast are striking the right note with the audience."

Roger Wright, head of Radio 3, has tried to make it a cultural rather than purely classical music station by introducing other types of music and drama.

A BBC spokesman said the station could not be compared to the more populist Classic FM, which has 6.5 million listeners.

She said: "The audience is stable and it's a case of work in progress as the changes are still going on."

Radio 1 has seen its audience slip by almost a million in the past year as it increasingly targeted listeners aged 15-24, leaving older ones to switch to Radio 2.

A spokesman said: "Over the last year the majority of our losses have been over 35s. Things have been going according to plan."
CHESTERFIELD SUPPORTERS' Society, which took over the Derbyshire club only 16 days ago and fought off a threat to its survival as recently as Tuesday, yesterday reached a possible point of rescue by putting the club into administration.

The administrators, Kidsons, will now try to plot a path out of debts of pounds 1.3m, run up in almost exactly a year since the then cash-rich club was taken over by Darren Brown, a 29-year-old former gas showroom salesman. Brown yesterday denied any wrongdoing and said he had "nothing to fear" from Derbyshire Police fraud squad's ongoing inquiry into the club's affairs.

Brown also refused to comment on the suggestion doing the rounds in Chesterfield that, when he apparently bought the club from the former owner Norton Lea last May, he partly paid Lea with pounds 400,000 transferred from the club to Brown's own company, UK Sports.

"I am being advised by my solicitor not to say anything about the payments from Chesterfield Football Club to my company, which the police are investigating," Brown said. "But I have done nothing wrong and hope soon to be able to give my explanation."

Phil Tooley, a Supporters' Society spokesman, said it had been "quite hectic" since the Society's takeover on 2 May, but the administration provided a chance for a fresh start: "We hope to draw a line under the horrific recent past, and start to restore trust at our club and bring it back to health."

Tooley said the Society, which boasts 2,000 members out of an average crowd of only twice that figure, hopes to satisfy creditors and trade out of administration still in control, rather than see the administrators sell the club to the highest bidder.

The administration order follows a frantic series of events at Chesterfield, which has included three changes of ownership, a deferred winding-up petition, promotion to the Second Division and last month's Football League tribunal, which found the club guilty of financial irregularities and imposed a pounds 20,000 fine and a nine-point deduction.

Brown sold the holding company, UK Sports Group, to a Rotherham-based car repair businessman, Andy Cooke, earlier this year. Brown claimed yesterday that he was trying to bring pounds 2m investment into the club. Cooke sold the company to the Supporters' Society only five days after the Society's emotional launch at a packed Chesterfield theatre.

The supporters, elated at buying the club, then peered inside it, finding the darkest of financial holes. Among the debts provisionally calculated by the administrators are: pounds 400,000 to the Inland Revenue, pounds 145,000 in VAT, and trade creditors of pounds 136,000, including pounds 20,000 owed to the kit manufacturer Glory Years, which joined a winding-up petition adjourned in court last Thursday. Football debts, which must be paid in full if a club is to continue in the Football League, total pounds 644,000.

The figure includes pounds 90,000 in wages, pounds 43,000 owed to Hull, Bristol City and Mansfield for their share of gate receipts, pounds 157,000 in transfer fees outstanding to Chester City, Tranmere and Huddersfield for striker Luke Beckett, winger Ryan Williams and midfielder Rob Edwards respectively, pounds 110,000 owed to former manager John Duncan and his assistant Kevin Randall, and the League's pounds 20,000 fine and legal costs of pounds 35,000 for the tribunal hearing. "It has been like finding the skeletons in our own cupboards," Tooley said.

Grimmest of all was a letter which arrived on 9 May, on behalf of four individuals trading as Sterling Consortium, with whom Brown had
taken out a pounds 150,000 loan for the club as recently as 9 April, secured on the Saltergate ground.

The letter demanded repayment in full, plus pounds 50,000 "costs and charges" and other payments, or receivers would be appointed. The fans had also discovered a 25 April letter from Keith Haslam, Mansfield's chairman, to Brown, offering Chesterfield a ground share at Mansfield. The Supporters' Society, panic-stricken that Saltergate would be repossessed and sold by Sterling, the club bust and moved to Mansfield, raised pounds 212,000, mainly from a few wealthy individuals, to pay the loan off in full on Tuesday. "The club was facing the ultimate threat to its existence," Tooley said. "Our intervention has at least saved it in the short term."

Rumours that Haslam's brother-in-law Nick Buchanan, the former Hull City chairman until they went into administration in February, was helping Brown at Chesterfield were confirmed by both men yesterday. Buchanan said he had introduced Brown to the financiers, and to Poppleton and Appleby, a Sheffield-based firm of insolvency practitioners who were paid pounds 8,000 as part of Sterling Consortium's costs.

Brown denied that the intention was to sell the ground and move to Mansfield. He said he intended the loan to be short-term, until he could resolve a running dispute with Norton Lea, then bring investment to the club. The letter from Haslam, he said, was to reassure a potential investor that Chesterfield did have an alternative option if the investor was ever forced to repossess Saltergate. "People are saying I took all the money and did a runner," Brown said, "that I was going to sell the ground and move the club to Mansfield, but it wasn't like that. I was looking to bring in investment."

Brown confirmed yesterday that his deal with Lea for the club was pounds 1.3m in total: pounds 500,000 Brown borrowed from Barclays Bank, guaranteed by Lea himself, and pounds 400,000 paid immediately. Brown refused to comment on the allegation that that payment was made with money which Brown admits he paid out of the club to his own company, UK Sports. Derbyshire's fraud squad is investigating that and all other payments between UK Sports and Chesterfield.

A further pounds 386,000 was due to be paid to Lea at the end of April. Earlier this year Lea started a legal action to recover the club from Brown, and the Supporters' Society effectively inherited Lea's claim. They are since understood to have met with him twice. "We are hopeful we can reach an amicable settlement with Mr Lea which will allow us to remain in control," Tooley said. Lea is currently on holiday.

Tooley added that the supporters will look for all ways to trade out of administration, pending a court review of the administration on 15 June. The Supporters' Society, only 16 days in, is already giving the lie to the idea that fans are somehow not fit to run clubs, a view which some in football still hold despite the Government's backing via its initiative Supporters Direct.

The four-man executive board appointed by the society includes Tooley, a local broadcaster and transport manager with Tarmac; Mike Warner, who recently retired from a career in financial services; Mike Kerry, an IT manager with Consignia, and Alan Walters, an accountant. "We have diverse skills, and as a society we can call on many more professional skills," Tooley said. "We're also democratic, which is a really welcome and necessary change." Promotion, Tooley said, was vital; the club's share of the League's commercial revenues will rise to around pounds 750,000 in the Second Division, an increase of pounds 300,000, providing the club with a lifeline.

Kate Hoey, the Sports Minister, who made herself unpopular with some of Chesterfield's fans by criticising as inadequate the League's nine- point penalty, applauded their efforts yesterday. "They've made great strides to rescue this awful situation. I have always stood up against financial wrongdoing in football clubs and, if any good is to come out of this, it must be for the FA to begin to vet businessmen coming into football clubs, to make sure they are fit and proper to do so."

Chesterfield have become the third club in quick succession to go into administration, following Hull City and Queen's Park Rangers. The new supporter-owners are fully dedicated to saving their club, after the mayhem of the past year. They have their work cut out.