



10 DOWNING STREET

11th February, 1981

Thank you for your letter of 9th February.

I would find the background notes on
Public Opinion most useful and look
forward to receiving them in the future.

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9th February 1981

Derek,

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTES

I thought a copy of a regular weekly review of public opinion that I produce might be of interest. This note includes details both of the results from our private 'tracking' research that Gallup conducts for us, and a review of all published political opinion research.

If you feel this note is likely to be of interest I can add your name to the circulation list.

Y —
Hester

D. K. Britto

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PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 51

1. Introduction

The interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted from January 28th until 2nd February during a period of almost continual press and television coverage of the possible emergence of a Centre Party/Social Democratic Party/Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance. The previous tracking study (conducted 21/26 January) had found a 7½% Labour lead and Liberal support standing at 17%. Our latest study found almost no change in the Labour lead (now 8%) but support for the Liberals continuing to increase (it now stands at 21½%). Support for the Liberals has shown an upward trend since early December 1980, as can be seen from the table in Section 2 below and from the attached graph.

2. Voting Intention

	<u>CON</u> %	<u>LAB</u> %	<u>LIB</u> %	<u>OTHER</u> %	<u>LEAD</u> %
<u>1979</u>					
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	5.5	+7.0
13/18 June*	42.0	43.5	13.0	2.5	-1.5
<u>1980</u>					
1/6 Oct	40.0	43.0	13.5	3.5	-3.0**
8/14 Oct	35.5	41.5	20.0	3.0	-6.0
15/20 Oct	40.5	43.0	14.0	2.5	-2.5**
22/27 Oct	37.5	42.0	18.0	2.5	-4.5
29 Oct/3 Nov	34.5	47.5	16.0	2.0	-13.0
5/10 Nov	41.5	40.5	14.0	4.0	+1.0
12/17 Nov	36.5	47.0	15.0	1.5	-10.5**
19/24 Nov	35.0	48.0	14.0	2.0	-13.0
26 Nov/1 Dec	35.0	49.5	13.0	2.5	-14.5
3/8 Dec	35.0	47.0	14.5	3.5	-12.0
10/15 Dec	35.0	47.5	14.5	3.0	-12.5**
<u>1981</u>					
7/12 Jan	34.0	48.0	15.0	3.0	-14.0
14/20 Jan	33.0	46.5	18.5	2.0	-13.5**
21/26 Jan	35.5	43.0	17.0	4.5	-7.5**
28 Jan/2 Feb	32.0	40.0	21.5	6.5	-8.0

*First Gallup post-election survey

** Published polls

Support for both the Labour and Conservative parties has been falling since before Christmas 1980 and Liberal support increasing. It is interesting to note the sharp jump in support for 'other' parties - it is tempting (but we have no evidence to support the view) that this is support for a Social Democratic Party. We will have results of the first of our tracking questions on the Social Democratic Party and a possible Liberal/Social Democratic alliance next week.

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3. Government Record

As with last week's tracking study almost no change in the approval for the Government's record.

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1980</u>			
1/6 Oct	30	57	13
8/14 Oct	32	55	13
15/20 Oct	34	54	12
22/27 Oct	29	60	11
29 Oct/3 Nov	30	59	12
5/10 Nov	32	54	14
12/17 Nov	29	60	11
19/24 Nov	27	60	13
26 Nov/1 Dec	27	62	11
3/8 Dec	26	64	11
10/15 Dec	29	59	12
<u>1981</u>			
7/12 Jan	27	61	12
14/20 Jan	26	63	11
21/26 Jan	28	58	14
28 Jan/2 Feb	26	62	12

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Almost no change in Mrs Thatcher's popularity but Mr Foot's popularity continues to fall with only one in five electors approving of him as Leader of the Opposition. Mr Steel's popularity has improved slightly.

For details please see table on the following page.

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POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>			
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Don't</u>	
	%	sat.	Know	%	Not	Know	%	Not	Know	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<u>1980</u>										
1/6 Oct	38	66	5	-	-	-	56	20	25	
8/14 Oct	37	58	5	-	-	-	60	16	24	
15/20 Oct	38	56	6	-	-	-	57	20	24	
22/27 Oct	37	57	6	-	-	-	50	34	16	
29 Oct/3 Nov	35	58	7	-	-	-	55	18	26	
5/10 Nov	39	53	8	-	-	-	49	17	34	
12/17 Nov	34	60	6	38	38	24	54	22	23	
19/24 Nov	32	63	5	41	37	22	58	20	22	
26 Nov/1 Dec	32	63	5	38	39	23	54	18	27	
3/8 Dec	33	62	5	28	33	39	58	18	24	
10/15 Dec	35	59	6	30	35	35	59	17	24	
<u>1981</u>										
7/12 Jan	33	61	6	24	39	36	56	21	23	
14/20 Jan	31	63	5	26	42	32	63	19	18	
21/26 Jan	34	61	5	23	43	34	57	19	21	
28 Jan/2 Feb	32	63	6	21	46	33	62	17	21	

5. Published Polls(a) B.M.R.B. ('Which' February 1981)

The Consumer Association publication 'Which' (February 1981) included a report on a survey conducted for them in September 1980 by B.M.R.B. on public awareness of, and attitudes to, various aspects of the Common Market. B.M.R.B. found:-

56% of people in 'Which' national survey agreed with the statement that we should never have entered the EEC in the first place.

Over half the people in 'Which' national survey thought we spent more on the EEC than on social security.

37% of people in the survey agreed with the statement that being in the EEC has meant higher food prices.

43% of people in the survey believed that the EEC was partly to blame for our current economic situation.

58% of the people in the survey agreed with the statement that the EEC was little more than an unnecessary and expensive bureaucracy.

(b) Audience Selection ('Now' 6th February 1981)

An Audience Selection poll conducted on Saturday 31st January for 'Now' (6th February 1981) looked at attitudes to a Social Democratic Party in David Owen's seat of Plymouth Devonport and Williams Rodger's seat of Stockton. Audience Selection asked how electors in the two constituencies would vote given four hypothetical patterns of

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candidature at a hypothetical election. Namely:-

- A. both Liberal and unnamed Social Democrat candidate standing.
- B. if Bill Rodgers and David Owen were standing as Social Democrats opposed by the three other parties.
- C. if a Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance candidate stood against the two major parties.
- D. if Rodgers and Owen were standing as the Social Democrat/Liberal candidates against the two major parties.

Audience Selection found the following pattern of support.

(i) PLYMOUTH DEVONPORT

	<u>Options</u>			
	<u>A</u> %	<u>B</u> %	<u>C</u> %	<u>D</u> %
Conservative	30	25	26	23
Labour	29	16	22	16
Liberal	10	4	-	-
Social Democrat	31	55	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	52	61

(ii) STOCKTON

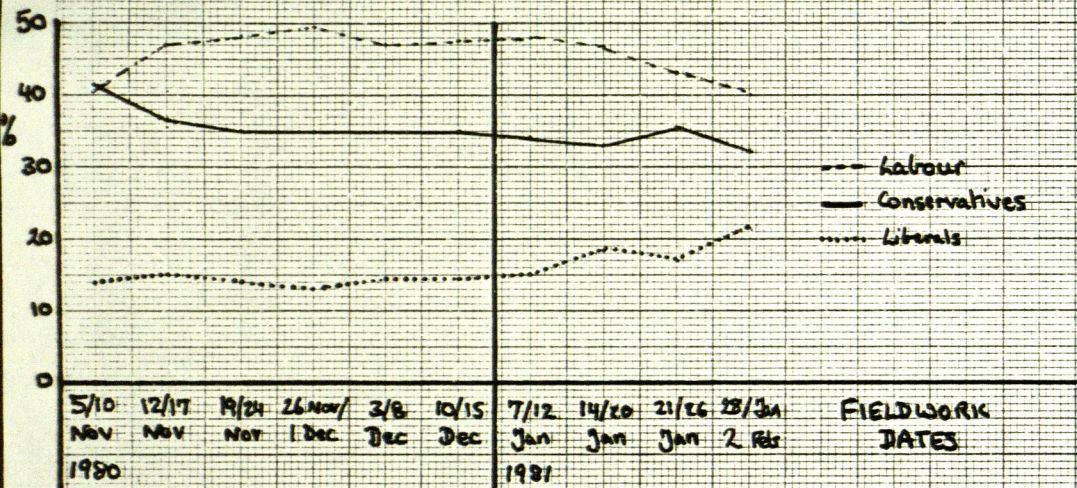
	<u>Options</u>			
	<u>A</u> %	<u>B</u> %	<u>C</u> %	<u>D</u> %
Conservative	27	22	24	23
Labour	38	28	30	26
Liberal	13	9	-	-
Social Democrat	22	41	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	46	51

With four unnamed candidates Audience Selection found that the Social Democrats might just win Devonport but by an extremely narrow marginal. In Stockton with four unnamed candidates (including a Social Democrat) they found that Labour would probably hold the seat.

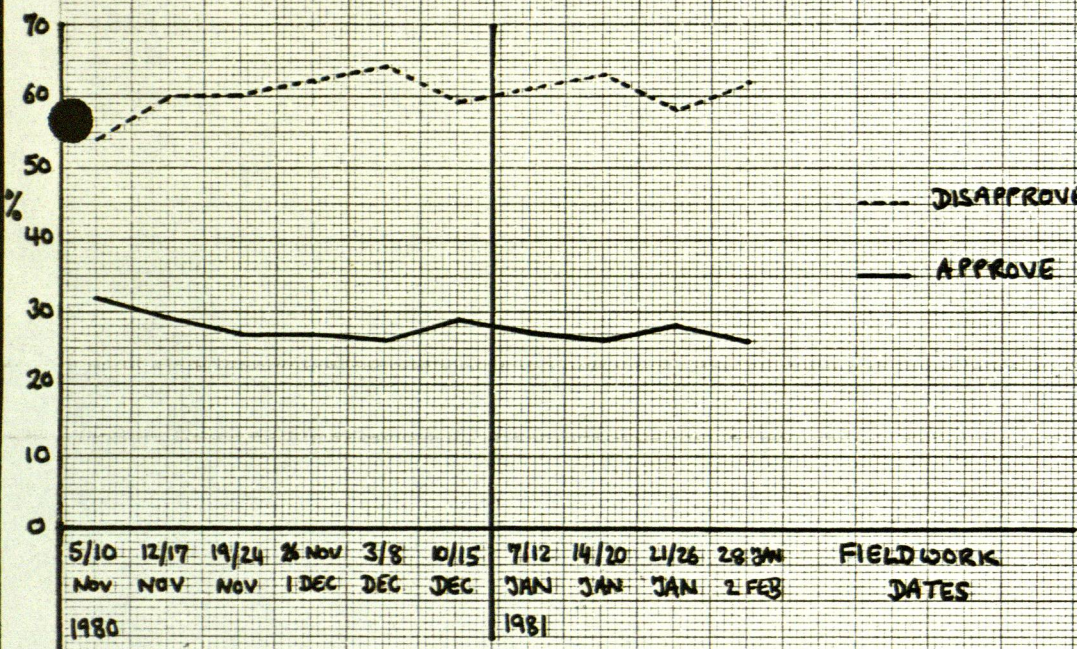
The picture changed when Audience Selection introduced the names of David Owen and Bill Rogers. In Devonport Audience Selection found if David Owen was included as a Social Democrat or Social Democrat/Liberal candidate that he would hold the seat with a substantial majority.

Audience Selection found a similar story in Stockton.

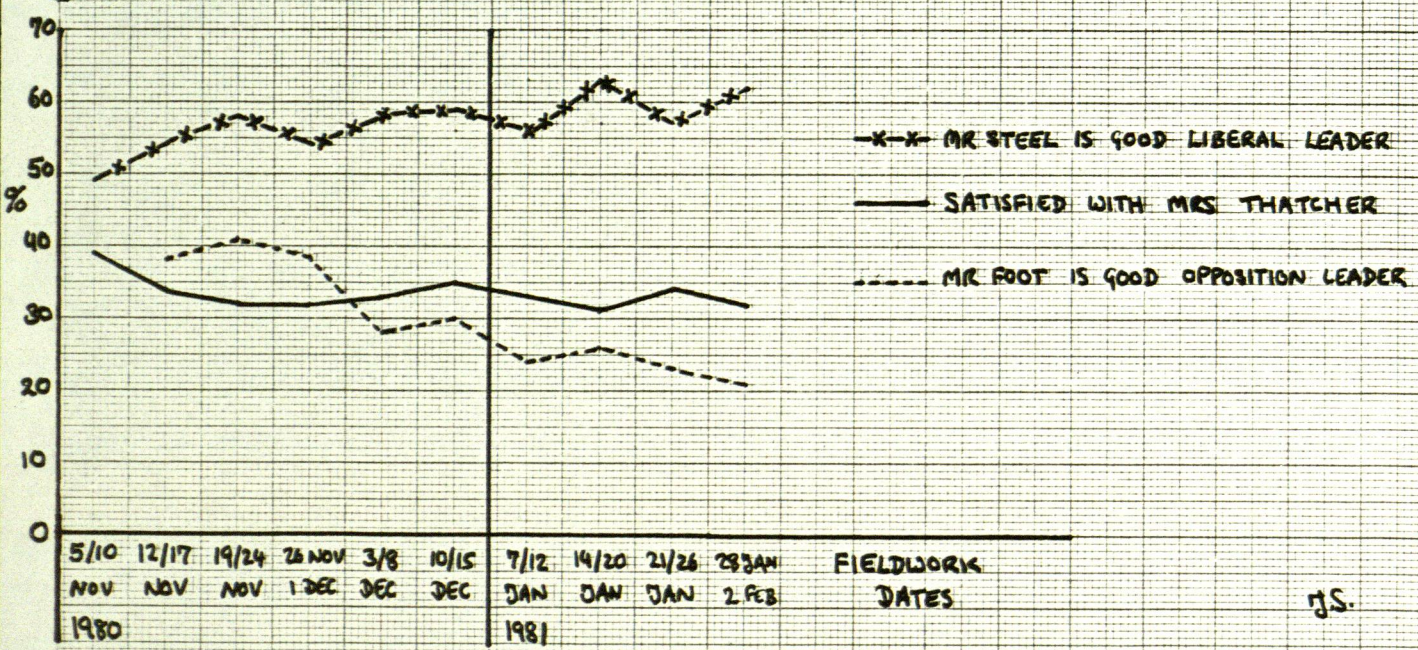
VOTING INTENTION



GOVERNMENT RECORD



POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS



J.S.