

(P)

Public Opinion Background Note 154

(produced 20th March 1983)

11. Introduction

We have had four polls in Darlington over the last week - in three of the polls the Conservative Party was in third place and only in one poll in second place. Details of these polls are shown below.

Darlington Surveys

	<u>ORC</u> (conducted 16th March)	<u>Audience</u> <u>Selection</u> (conducted 16th March)	<u>NOP</u> (conducted 16/17 March)	<u>Sunday People Poll</u> (conducted 18th March)
	%	%	%	%
Labour	35	27	37.3	36.5
SDP	38	40	35.6	38.6
Conservative	27	33	26.4	24.6
Others	1	0	0.7	0.3

The Audience Selection poll was conducted by telephone and although finding the Conservatives in second place almost certainly seriously underestimates the Labour vote. Labour voters tend not to have telephones - so are not interviewed by Audience Selection. Labour support in the standard non-telephone polls has varied from 35% (ORC) to 37.3% (NOP), SDP support has varied from 35.6% (NOP) to 38.6% (Sunday People) and Conservative support has varied from 24.6% (Sunday People) to 27% (ORC). Both ORC and the Sunday People found the SDP leading Labour, NOP found Labour leading the SDP. In all cases the difference between Labour and SDP is so small as not to be significant in polling terms - all that can be concluded is that Labour and SDP are 'neck and neck'. Further polls in Darlington can be expected before voting on Thursday (25th March).

Gallup conducted the interviewing for our national 'tracking' study from 9th to 14th March. The study found a sharp increase in the national level of Conservative support. The findings of this pre-budget study are not confirmed by the results of a MORI study published in the Economist on 19th March 1983 and conducted on 16th March. The upsurge in Alliance support after Bermondsey has not continued in these latest studies - it would appear to have stabilised at around 25/26%. The table overleaf shows comparative figures from the two studies

National Polls - Voting Intention

	<u>Gallup</u> (9/14 March)	<u>MORI</u> (16 March)
	%	%
Conservative	47½	42
Labour	24	28
Alliance	26½	27
Other	2	3

Details of the trend of support for the main parties in our Gallup studies are shown in the tables overleaf.

NOTE

Tyne Tees television on 21st March 1983 included details of a MORI poll conducted on 19th March in Finchley. The survey found 40% claiming they will vote Labour, 34% Alliance, 25% Conservative and 1% for 'other' parties.

Voting Intention(unprompted question, excluding
don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL & SOCIAL</u>
				DEMOCRAT		Con over Lab	DEMOCRAT
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>							
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	+7.0	13.8
13/16 June*	42.0	43.5	13.0	-	5.0	-9.0	13.0
<u>1982</u>							
1/6 Sept	43.5	28.5	8.0	17.0+	3.0	+15.0	25.0
8/13 Sept	44.0	30.5	8.5	14.5+	2.5	+13.5**	23.0
15/21 Sept	42.0	33.0	8.0	15.0+	2.0	+9.0	23.0
22/27 Sept	43.0	29.5	12.5	13.0+	2.0	+13.5	25.5
29 Sept/4 Oct	40.0	31.5	13.5	13.0+	2.0	+8.5	26.5
6/11 Oct	42.5	32.0	10.5	13.0+	2.0	+10.5	23.5
13/18 Oct	43.0	31.0	9.0	13.5+	3.5	+12.0	22.5
20/25 Oct	40.5	29.0	12.0	15.0+	3.5	+11.5**	27.0
27 Oct/1 Nov	48.0	31.0	8.5	11.0+	1.5	+17.0	19.5
3/10 Nov	44.0	33.0	9.0	12.0+	2.0	+11.0	21.0
10/15 Nov	42.0	35.0	8.0	13.0+	2.0	+7.0**	21.0
17/22 Nov	41.5	33.0	9.0	14.0+	2.5	+8.5	23.0
24/29 Nov	46.5	32.0	7.5	11.5+	2.5	+14.5	19.0
1/6 Dec	43.0	35.0	9.0	11.0+	2.0	+8.0	20.0
8/13 Dec	41.0	34.5	9.0	13.0+	2.5	+6.5**	22.0
<u>1983</u>							
7/11 Jan	44.0	33.0	10.5	11.0+	1.5	+11.0	21.5
12/17 Jan	44.0	31.5	11.5	11.0+	2.0	+12.5**	22.5
18/25 Jan	47.5	30.5	9.0	11.0+	2.0	+17.0	20.0
27/31 Jan	45.0	31.0	10.0	12.0+	2.0	+14.0	22.0
2/7 Feb	43.0	30.0	11.0	13.0+	3.0	+13.0	24.0
9/14 Feb	43.5	32.5	10.5	11.5+	2.0	+11.0**	22.0
17/21 Feb	44.5	34.5	9.0	10.0+	2.0	+10.0	19.0
24/28 Feb	42.0	29.0	10.0	17.0+	2.0	+13.0	27.0
2/7 March	42.0	28.5	12.0	15.0+	2.5	+13.5	27.0
9/14 March	47.5	24.0	10.0	16.5+	2.0	+23.5	26.5

* First Gallup Post-Election Survey, ** Published Polls, + includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

VOTING INTENTION(unprompted question, including
don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>DON'T</u> <u>KNOW</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL</u> & <u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>								
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	-	+7.0	13.8
<u>1982</u>								
1/6 Sept	39.0	26.0	7.0	15.0	3.0	10.0	+13.0	22.0
8/13 Sept	40.0	28.0	8.0	13.0	2.0	8.0	+12.0**	21.0
15/21 Sept	38.0	29.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	11.0	+9.0	19.0
22/27 Sept	39.0	27.0	12.0	12.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0	24.0
29th Sept/4th Oct	37.0	29.0	12.0	12.0	2.0	8.0	+8.0	24.0
6/11 Oct	38.0	29.0	10.0	12.0	1.0	10.0	+9.0	22.0
13/18 Oct	39.0	28.0	8.0	13.0	3.0	9.0	+11.0	21.0
20/25 Oct	37.0	27.0	11.0	13.0	4.0	8.0	+10.0**	24.0
27 Oct/1 Nov	44.0	28.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	8.0	+16.0	19.0
3/10 Nov	41.0	31.0	8.0	11.0	2.0	8.0	+10.0	19.0
10/15 Nov	38.0	31.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	10.0	+7.0**	19.0
17/22 Nov	41.0	29.0	11.0	9.0	1.0	9.0	+12.0	20.0
24/29 Nov	41.0	29.0	7.0	10.0	2.0	11.0	+12.0	17.0
1/6 Dec	39.0	32.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	+7.0	18.0
8/13 Dec	37.0	31.0	8.0	11.0	3.0	10.0	+6.0**	19.0
<u>1983</u>								
7/11 Jan	39.5	29.5	9.5	9.5	1.5	10.5	+10.0	19.0
12/17 Jan	40.0	29.0	10.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	+11.0	20.0
18/25 Jan	43.0	28.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	10.0	+15.0	18.0
27/31 Jan	40.0	28.0	9.0	11.0	2.0	10.0	+12.0	20.0
2/7 Feb	39.0	27.0	10.0	12.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0	22.0
9/14 Feb	40.0	30.0	10.0	10.0	1.0	8.0	+10.0	20.0
17/21 Feb	41.0	31.0	8.0	9.0	1.0	9.0	+10.0	17.0
24/28 Feb	38.0	26.0	9.0	16.0	1.0	10.0	+12.0	25.0
2/7 March	39.0	26.0	11.0	14.0	2.0	8.0	+13.0	25.0
9/14 March	42.0	21.0	9.0	15.0	1.0	11.0	+21.0	24.0

** Published polls, + includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

The latest study found no significant change in the level of approval/disapproval for the Government - 42% approved of our record to date, 44% disapproved and 13% did not have a view. This compares with the situation at the start of January when 43% approved of our record in Government, 44% disapproved and 13% did not have a view.

Details of the trend of replies to this question are shown below:-

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1982</u>			
1/6 Sept	41	45	14
8/13 Sept	40	48	13
15/21 Sept	38	49	13
22/27 Sept	38	50	12
29 Sept/4 Oct	36	51	13
6/11 Oct	40	47	13
13/18 Oct	38	48	14
20/25 Oct	40	49	11
27 Oct/1 Nov	42	45	13
3/10 Nov	41	45	15
10/15 Nov	39	48	13
17/22 Nov	39	47	13
24/29 Nov	44	44	13
1/6 Dec	42	47	11
8/13 Dec	37	50	13
<u>1983</u>			
7/11 Jan	43	44	13
12/17 Jan	43	43	14
18/25 Jan	45	43	12
27/31 Jan	41	44	15
2/7 Feb	40	48	12
9/14 Feb	39	49	12
17/21 Feb	41	46	13
24/25 Feb	39	49	12
2/7 March	43	47	10
9/14 March	42	44	13

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest Gallup study found a very slight improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity and in that of Mr Jenkins. The popularity of Mr Foot and Mr Steel fell slightly.

Details are shown below:-

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>			<u>Mr Jenkins</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1982</u>												
1/6 Sept	49	45	6	14	74	12	59	20	21	35	30	35
8/13 Sept	48	47	5	16	74	10	59	21	20	37	32	31
15/21 Sept	46	49	6	14	73	12	62	19	19	33	34	33
22/27 Sept	46	50	4	16	74	11	64	20	16	35	31	34
29 Sept/4 Oct	44	51	5	27	60	13	64	19	17	36	33	31
6/11 Oct	46	48	6	25	62	13	62	22	17	35	33	32
13/18 Oct	45	50	5	23	66	11	56	25	19	34	36	30
20/25 Oct	46	50	4	20	69	12	60	22	18	35	34	31
27 Oct/1Nov	48	48	4	20	66	14	57	24	18	35	37	28
3/10 Nov	48	48	5	23	65	11	58	24	18	34	37	29
10/15 Nov	44	52	5	22	67	12	59	22	19	37	33	30
17/22 Nov	44	51	5	25	63	11	59	20	20	33	36	31
24/29 Nov	48	47	5	18	68	14	57	22	20	31	35	34
1/6 Dec	45	51	5	23	67	10	62	18	19	35	34	31
8/13 Dec	44	53	4	20	69	10	60	23	17	34	34	31
<u>1983</u>												
7/11 Jan	48	47	6	18	68	14	62	20	17	30	33	36
12/17 Jan	49	45	6	17	69	14	62	19	19	30	31	39
18/25 Jan	51	44	5	18	72	10	61	20	19	33	35	31
27/31 Jan	47	48	5	18	70	13	61	19	21	33	35	32
2/7 Feb	46	49	5	15	72	13	60	22	17	31	40	29
9/14 Feb	45	50	5	17	72	11	62	21	17	33	39	28
17/21 Feb	46	49	5	18	71	11	63	18	19	35	36	29
24/28 Feb	45	50	5	17	71	12	66	14	20	37	33	30
2/7 March	47	49	4	20	70	10	69	15	15	35	34	30
9/14 March	48	47	5	16	71	13	67	15	18	36	32	32

4. Published Polls(a) MORI (The Economist 19th March 1983)

The Economist on 19th March 1983 included details of a MORI study conducted on 16th March 1983. In addition to the voting intention question already considered MORI asked a number of other questions on attitudes to the budget.

MORI found 33% taking the view that the 'general economic condition of the country' will improve - this compares with 27% taking this view before Budget day - there was no change in the proportion thinking the economy will get worse. MORI asked respondents did they think the budget should or should not have implemented a range of measures?

Budget Measures

(Budget should/should not have)

	<u>Budget should have</u>	<u>Budget should not have</u>
	%	%
Reduced the standard rate of income tax (%)	68	27
Decreased VAT (%)	68	25
Increased pensions by more than inflation (%)	74	24
Increased taxes on company car users (%)	65	28
Increased the £25,000 mortgage interest for tax relief limit (%)	55	34
Increased unemployment benefit by more than inflation (%)	46	49
Increased taxes on tobacco by more than inflation (%)	38	56
Increased taxes on alcohol by more than inflation (%)	34	62

MORI found 42% thought the budget was good for them personally, 41% bad for them personally, and 17% did not have a view. 46% saw the budget as being good for the country, 38% bad for the country and 16% did not have a view.

Three quarters of those polled felt pensions should be raised by more than inflation, and almost half said the same for unemployment benefit. The increase in tax relief on mortgage interest was popular. The only area in which higher taxes were clearly favoured was for users of company cars.

A strong preference was also expressed for spending on social services, with 80% declaring that the government should have 'kept taxes as they are and not reduced spending on the social services, like education, health and welfare'. Only 14% said that the government

should have cut both taxes and social services. (although these have not been cut, the public perception is that they have been). A marginally smaller proportion (70%) said that defence and law and order spending should have a similar primacy. Labour's favourite types of public spending are at least as popular as the Tories.

This phenomenon was the more marked when respondents were asked directly whether the government should spend more on defence and less on social services. Only 21% made this choice, while 67% chose a reversed order of priorities. The public's support for maintained social services, possibly emphasised by the recession, is deeply rooted and bipartisan.

(b) Marplan (Guardian 17th March 1983)

The Guardian on 17th March included details of a Marplan poll conducted from March 7th to 9th. The survey found 41% claiming they would vote Conservative, 31% Alliance, 27% Labour and 1% for 'other' parties. Details of the trend in Marplan polls since November 1982 are shown below:-

	<u>Marplan Polls</u>				
	<u>March</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Nov</u>
	<u>1983</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	41	49	48	44	46
Alliance	31	22	21	23	18
Labour	27	28	30	32	34
Others	1	1	1	1	2.