



Conservative Central Office

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STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Copies of three reports on the current state of public opinion are enclosed.

These are:

- (a) the report of our latest 'State of Battle' survey (conducted 27/28 May).
- (b) a review of published public opinion polls
- (c) weekly report on operation 'Fast Feed Back'. It should be noted that this exercise involves monitoring reactions to the campaign in a 'panel' of non-Conservative activist opinion formers. It is not a survey of public opinion.

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THIRD STATE OF THE BATTLE SURVEY

Fieldwork dates : 27/28 May 1983

Sample size : 2076

A nationally representative quota sample
of electors in 100 sampling points.

49916.

London Paris New York Washington DC.

SUMMARY

1. Although the Conservative lead over Labour is up by two percent, there are signs of a modest Alliance improvement particularly in Wales, the East Midlands, East Anglia and the South East.
2. There is still vulnerability to an Alliance bandwagon. Up to a quarter of Conservative voters and a third of Labour voters could go to the Alliance if they were credible either as a possible majority party or holding the balance of power.
3. This must be read in the context of 47% of all voters, including 19% of all Conservatives and 33% of weak Conservatives believing that it would be bad for the country for the Conservatives to be returned with a very big majority.
4. The battle on defence has been won amongst all groups in all regions. It is difficult to imagine Labour's position being pushed much lower on this.
5. There has been no movement in favour of the Conservatives on Health, Education or Pensions.
6. The Conservative position on unemployment has improved slightly, but the Party is still vulnerable on youth unemployment where a large majority believe that bigger and better schemes could have been developed.
7. Labour are very vulnerable on devaluation which is thought to be both bad and the likely result of a Labour Government.

Police where bringing police forces under local political control is widely disapproved of.

Private Medicine where a clear majority believe that people should be allowed to pay if they wish.

8. Labour's plans to bring pension funds under greater government control has a much more mixed reception and this thought to be a good idea by a substantial minority of Conservative voters.
9. Labour's left wing policies threatening our national way of life is still a widely credible proposition and Mr Foot is widely thought to be wrong to endorse left wing Labour candidates.

Main FindingsVOTING INTENTION

1. After the exclusion of the 9% of voters who were undecided the Conservative lead stands at 14%.

The fieldwork for this survey was carried out after the polls published on Sunday. The differences from previous weeks in terms of support for the main parties is not statistically significant.

Table 1. VOTING INTENTION

National figures - Don't Knows excluded

	<u>27/28</u>	<u>20/21</u>	<u>13/14</u>	<u>6/7</u>
	May	May	May	May
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	46	46	48	44
Labour	32	34	34	34
Liberal/SDP Alliance	20	19	16	20
Other	2	1	2	2

2. The regional analysis of voting intention indicates:- (see Table 2 - follows)

Northern region: Stable - a Labour lead of 13% similar to the last 2 weeks.

Yorkshire: A substantial Conservative lead - 17% - a function of the Prime Minister's visit just before fieldwork?

East Midlands: An apparent improvement in Alliance fortunes - (up 6%) largely at the expense of Conservatives (down 9%).

East Anglia: A 9% drop in the Conservative vote going mostly to "Don't knows".

South East: Conservative vote holding up well at 53%, but evidence of the Labour vote crumbling and the Alliance moving firmly into second place.

Greater London: No significant change on the Alliance vote, but the Conservative lead over Labour enhanced at 10% (5% last week).

South West: No significant change from the early part of the campaign.

West Midlands: No significant change throughout the campaign so far - an 11% Conservative lead compared with 14% on 6/7 May.

North West: Not significantly different from the beginning of the campaign - a 4% Labour lead as opposed to a 3% lead on 6/7 May.

Scotland: The Conservative advantage gained during the Scottish Conference has been lost and Labour now has an 8% lead. 14% of Scottish voters now are in the 'undecided' category.

Wales: The Labour and Conservative parties are now absolutely equal while the Alliance has moved up to 24%.

Conclusion

The Conservative vote in the North of England is holding up relatively well. There is some evidence that in the

East Midlands, East Anglia and the South East that there has been an increase in Alliance support. At present the increase in Alliance support is not a "bandwagon" but it could represent the start of a significant movement of support to them.

Table 1. VOTING INTENTIONNational figures - Don't knows excluded.

	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
Conservative	46	46	48	44
Labour	32	34	34	34
Liberal/SDP Alliance	20	19	16	20
Other	2	1	2	2

Table 2. REGIONAL VOTING INTENTION
(Dont knows/Refused Included)

	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
		<u>NORTH</u>		
Conservative	32	30	32	27
Labour	45	46	44	50
Alliance	15	13	14	10
Other	1	-	2	2
Dont know/Refused	7	10	8	12
		<u>YORKSHIRE</u>		
Conservative	46	39	44	45
Labour	29	39	39	29
Alliance	16	15	12	22
Other	1	-	1	-
Dont know/Refused	8	7	5	4
		<u>EAST MIDLANDS</u>		
Conservative	40	49	48	39
Labour	28	27	28	41
Alliance	22	16	18	15
Other	1	1	-	-
Dont know/Refused	8	6	6	5
		<u>EAST ANGLIA</u>		
Conservative	40	49	51	53
Labour	23	23	26	17
Alliance	19	17	12	22
Other	-	-	1	-
Don't know/Refused	18	11	10	8

Table 2 Continued

Field Work Dates.	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
<u>SOUTH EAST</u>				
Conservative	53	47	53	53
Labour	17	24	19	21
Alliance	25	22	18	20
Other	1	-	1	-
Dont know/Refused	5	7	9	6
<u>GREATER LONDON</u>				
Conservative	42	39	42	41
Labour	32	34	34	37
Alliance	18	19	13	15
Other	1	-	1	1
Dont know/Refused	7	7	10	6
<u>SOUTH WEST</u>				
Conservative	49	54	43	49
Labour	18	16	17	23
Alliance	21	21	25	24
Other	1	-	-	-
Dont know/Refused	11	9	15	4
<u>WEST MIDLANDS</u>				
Conservative	42	45	47	44
Labour	31	29	31	30
Alliance	15	16	12	21
Other	1	-	1	-
Dont know/Refused	12	10	9	5

Table 2 Continued

Field Date Works.	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
		<u>NORTH WEST</u>		
Conservative	35	38	36	37
Labour	39	40	42	40
Alliance	14	11	11	18
Other	-	-	-	-
Dont know/Refused	11	11	10	6
		<u>SCOTLAND</u>		
Conservative	28	33	42	26
Labour	36	35	33	38
Alliance	14	17	12	20
Other	9	7	6	11
Dont know/Refused	14	8	7	5
		<u>WALES</u>		
Conservative	35	37	38	40
Labour	35	37	33	32
Alliance	24	16	19	18
Other	1	1	3	7
Dont know/Refused	6	10	8	3

3. Strength of Loyalty

Although the Conservative vote appears to be firming up a little (now 51% very strong and 34% fairly strong compared with 47% and 33% last week) there are still 15% of Conservative supporters who describe themselves as 'not very strong' and must therefore be vulnerable.

TABLE. 3. STRENGTH OF LOYALTY.

<u>May Fieldwork</u>	CONSERVATIVE			LABOUR			ALLIANCE		
	27/28	20/21	6/7	27/28	20/21	6/7	27/28	20/21	6/7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very strongly	51	47	42	48	48	51	32	23	25
Fairly strongly	34	33	41	33	31	33	42	47	49
Not very strongly	15	17	17	16	19	15	25	27	27
Dont know	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	-

4. Election Result Expectations

95% of Conservatives, 66% of Labour voters and 86% of Alliance supporters expect the Conservatives to win the election.

This is not significantly different from last week.

5. Perception of the Campaign

Almost one in four voters believe that both the Conservatives and Labour are running unfair campaigns and 10% believe this true of the Alliance - no significant change from last week.

TABLE 4. UNFAIR CAMPAIGNING

	27/28 May	ALL VOTERS	
		20/21 May	19 May
Party thought to be unfair.	%	%	%
Conservative	24	22	21
Labour	24	24	18
Alliance	10	7	7
Other	2	1	4
Dont know/none	61	63	65

6. Election Debating Propositions

The Conservative Government's policies are still being blamed for the level of unemployment and damage to the health and education service - on all of these there has been no change since the start of the campaign.

There has been a significant shift on the level of agreement with the statement:-

'Labour's policies on nuclear disarmament are likely to win more support than Conservative policies'.

This week only 26% agree and 60% disagree compared with 32% and 53% last week.

Full details from the replies to these questions are shown overleaf:-

ELECTION DEBATING PROPOSITIONS : SUMMARY TABLES

'The current level of unemployment is largely due to the present Conservative Government's policies!'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	51	40
13/14 May	46	41
20/21 May	48	40
27/28 May	47	41

'Labour's policies on nuclear disarmament are likely to win more support than Conservative policies.'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	30	53
13/14 May	30	53
20/21 May	32	53
27/28 May	26	60

'The policies of the Conservative Government since they were elected have severely damaged the National Health Service'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	52	29
13/14 May	46	38
20/21 May	49	37
27/28 May	47	37

'The policies of the Conservative Government since they were elected have severely damaged the education service provided for most children.'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	53	31
13/14 May	46	38
20/21 May	46	39
27/28 May	44	39

7. Effectiveness of Parties at Dealing with Problems

In common with some published polls this survey shows an improvement in the relative standing of the Conservative Party with regard to its perceived ability to deal with unemployment. In the latest study 36% regarded Labour as the best party to deal with unemployment and 31% Conservative - this compares with 40% and 28% last week.

The Conservatives already substantial advantage last week has increased marginally on the following items:-

- Rising Prices
- Law and Order
- Controlling Trade Unions
- Dealing with the Common Market
- Defence of the Country

The only item on which Labour still has a distinct advantage which has not changed since last week is 'helping old age pensioners'.

Detailed results are shown in the table overleaf.

SUMMARY TABLE : PARTY THOUGHT BEST AT DEALING WITH :

		CONS	LAB	ALLIANCE	OTHER/DONT KNOW
<u>UNEMPLOYMENT</u>					
	13/14 May	29	39	10	22
	20/21 May	28	40	10	20
	27/28 May	31	36	13	20
<u>RISING PRICES</u>					
	13/14 May	47	26	8	19
	20/21 May	48	26	8	17
	27/28 May	50	25	9	15
<u>LAW AND ORDER</u>					
	13/14 May	52	19	7	22
	20/21 May	51	20	7	21
	27/28 May	54	20	8	19
<u>CONTROLLING TRADE UNIONS</u>					
	13/14 May	54	30	5	12
	20/21 May	56	28	6	11
	27/28 May	54	28	6	13
<u>DEALING WITH THE COMMON MARKET</u>					
	13/14 May	54	23	7	16
	20/21 May	53	25	8	14
	27/28 May	55	24	9	13
<u>DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY</u>					
	13/14 May	60	18	5	17
	20/21 May	61	21	7	11
	27/28 May	63	19	8	11
<u>HELPING OLD AGE PENSIONERS</u>					
	13/14 May	*	*	*	*
	20/21 May	26	47	8	18
	27/28 May	30	45	11	15

(*not asked in that week)

8. Specific Issue Areas

A. The Economy and Unemployment

Factors most to blame for unemployment

Only 3 items from a prepared list were selected by more than 5% of voters.

- World economic conditions blamed by 35% of electors, no significant change from last week (36%).
- The Conservative Government blamed by 28% of voters, again no significant change from last week. Only 4% of Conservatives, but two thirds of Labour and one third of Alliance voters selected this option.
- The Trade Unions mentioned by 18% (15% last week).

Devaluation

Of the three quarters of voters who express an opinion about devaluation a large majority (59% to 14%) believe it would be a bad thing for the country rather than a good thing. This includes a clear majority of Labour and Alliance supporters.

By a similar clear majority 57% believe the Labour Party would be the party most likely to devalue compared with 15% who believe the Conservatives would do so.

This is clearly an issue on which Labour is potentially very vulnerable.

Income Tax

40% of voters believe the Conservative Party is the party most likely to reduce income tax while only 24% believe the Labour Party is likely to do so.

While there is obvious polarisation along political lines, it is interesting to note that the Conservative appeal on this issue is much more credible among men (49%) than among women (33%). Women are more likely not to take a view on this.

Control of Pension Funds

There is not a clear view among voters as to whether there should be more Government Control of Pension Funds (30%) or less (41%).

28% of Conservative voters, 30% of Alliance voters and 37% of Labour voters think this would be a good thing.

Long Term Prosperity

48% of voters believe that the Conservative Party offers 'the best long term prospects for the prosperity of Britain' 25% believe the Labour Party does so and 15% the Alliance.

10% of Labour voters attribute this to the Conservative Party as do 20% of Alliance voters.

A majority of voters in every geographical region believes that the Conservatives offer the best long term prospects.

Youth Unemployment Schemes

Three quarters of voters have heard of Government schemes to help the young unemployment.

Of these only 27% accept that the Government has done as much as they could reasonably be expected to do and two thirds, including more than half the strong Conservative voters, believe that the government 'could do a great deal more to extend and develop these schemes'.

B. Police

By 69% to 19% voters believe it would be a bad idea rather than a good idea to bring the police under the political control of local councils, a clear majority of Labour- Alliance supporters share this view as does a clear majority in every region.

C. Private Medicine

Two thirds of voters believe that people should be allowed to pay for private medical care if they wish including 84% of Conservatives, 71% of Alliance supporters and 39% of Labour voters.

31% believe that people should be obliged to use the NHS.

D. Labour and Defence

38% of electors thought they had heard something 'about Labour changing its position on nuclear weapons and disarmament. These were fairly evenly spread across all political demographic and regional groups.

Of these, more than half, including 22% of Labour voters, said that it would make them less likely to vote Labour.

9. The Parties

1. The Alliance

- there is little credibility in the proposition that 'There is little difference between the policies of the Alliance and those of the Labour Party.'

Only 25% accept the argument while 54% reject it, compared with 29% and 47% in the first week of the campaign.

- There is still great vulnerability to any potential Alliance bandwagon almost one in 4 Conservatives and 1 in 3 Labour voters would be more likely to vote for the Alliance if they thought it would either get a majority or hold the balance of power. These figures have remained static throughout the campaign. Very few Conservative voters would be vulnerable if it were thought that the Alliance would win only a few seats (6%).

Whether likely to vote for the Alliance if think:-

	<u>All</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
(a) <u>Would get a majority</u>	%	%	%	%
Yes	38	22	29	87
No	57	74	68	10
Don't Know	5	4	3	3
(b) <u>Were likely to hold the Balance of Power</u>				
Yes	35	17	28	87
No	59	78	67	10
Don't Know	6	5	5	3
(c) <u>Would win only a few seats</u>				
Yes	20	6	8	72
No	74	91	86	23
Don't Know	6	4	6	5

- It is possibly dangerous that a majority of all voters and Conservative voters (51% and 57% respectively) believe that an improvement in the Alliance performance would harm Labour more than the Conservatives (only 30% of all voters and 25% of Conservatives think the Conservatives would be most harmed).

2. Labour

- A clear majority of voters (55% agree) and 36% disagree with the proposition that 'the policies of the Labour Party are so left wing that if they were elected they would damage our traditional way of life in Britain'.

The percentages have not changed significantly throughout the campaign.

- A clear majority of voters - 53% also believe Mr Foot is wrong to endorse very left wing Labour candidates. A third of Labour voters share this view. Only 34% (51% of Labour voters) accept that he is only doing 'what any Labour leader would be expected to do'.

3. The Conservatives

53% of voters believe the big Conservative poll lead, 39% do not, 88% (including 84% of Conservatives) say that such a big lead on polling day would not affect the way they vote, the balance is evenly split between those who would be more likely to vote Conservative and those less likely to do so.

However, there is a major potential problem in that 47% of voters including 19% of Conservatives (and 33% of weak Conservatives) agree with the view that:-

'It would be bad for Britain if there were to be too big a Conservative majority in the next Parliament.'

Three quarters of Labour and two thirds of Alliance voters share this view.

Only 45% of voters reject it.