

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 96

(produced 19th January 1982)

1. Introduction

We have just received the results of the first Gallup 'tracking' study conducted in 1982. The analysis of the survey has been delayed due to postal delays caused by the rail dispute. The survey found a sharp drop in the level of support for the Social Democrats - it found a drop in support for them from 36% in our last study in 1981 (conducted 9/14 December) to 25% in our latest study (conducted 6/11 January). The combined level of support for the two Alliance parties fell from 50½% to 42%. Conservative support increased from 23% to 25½%, Labour support increased from 23½% to 30% and Liberal support increased from 14½% to 17% over the period 9/14 December to 6/11 January. Although we have evidence from other research (ORC survey conducted for Weekend World) of the start of a fall in support for the Social Democrats, it is too early to draw any firm conclusions with regard to the trend in support for them. We will need to look closely at the trend in support for the Social Democrats over the next three or four weeks before attempting to draw any firm conclusions.

The table below shows details of the trend in support for the main parties since early June 1982.

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

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL + SOCIAL DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<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>1981</u>							
3/8 June	31.0	40.0	14.0	12.5	2.5	-9.0	26.5
9/15 June	29.5	37.5	18.0	12.5	2.5	-8.0**	30.5
16/22 June	32.0	37.0	15.5	13.0	2.5	-5.0	28.5
24/30 June	29.0	40.0	17.0	12.0	2.0	-11.0	29.0
1/6 July	30.5	39.5	14.0	13.0	3.0	-9.0	27.0
8/13 July	30.0	40.5	14.5	12.0	3.0	-10.5**	26.5
15/20 July	29.0	36.0	16.0	17.0	2.0	-7.0	33.0
22/27 July	26.0	38.0	13.0	21.0	2.0	-12.0	34.0
29 July/3 Aug	25.5	40.0	11.5	20.5	2.5	-14.5	32.0
5/10 Aug	27.0	36.0	15.0	19.0	4.0	-9.0	33.0
12 Aug	28.0	38.5	13.0	19.0	1.5	-10.5**	32.0
19/24 Aug	29.0	34.0	17.0	18.0	2.0	-5.0	35.0
26/31 Aug	26.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	2.0	-15.0	31.0
1/7 Sept	25.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	3.0	-16.0	31.0
9/14 Sept	32.0	36.5	11.5	17.5	2.5	-4.5**	29.0
16/21 Sept	25.0	36.5	16.0	19.0	3.5	-11.5	35.0
23/28 Sept	24.5	33.5	16.5	24.0	1.5	-9.0	40.5
30 Sept/5 Oct	26.0	38.0	12.0	21.0	3.0	-12.0	33.0
7/12 Oct	27.0	31.0	12.5	26.5	3.0	-4.0	39.0
14/19 Oct	28.5	34.0	12.5	22.0	3.0	-5.5	34.5
21/25 Oct	29.5	28.0	13.5	26.5	2.5	+1.5**	40.0
28 Oct/ 2 Nov	26.5	29.0	13.0	29.5	2.5	-2.5	42.5
4/9 Nov	26.5	28.5	14.5	28.5	2.0	-2.0	43.0
11/16 Nov	26.5	29.0	15.0	27.0	2.5	-2.5**	42.0
18/23 Nov	25.5	26.0	14.0	32.0	2.5	-0.5	46.0
25/30 Nov	25.0	26.5	15.5	30.0	3.0	-1.5	45.5
2/7 Dec	26.0	21.0	13.5	38.0	1.5	+5.0	51.5
9/14 Dec	23.0	23.5	14.5	36.0	3.0	-0.5**	50.5
<u>1982</u>							
6/11 Jan	25.5	30.0	17.0	25.0	2.5	-4.5	42.0

\*First Gallup post election  
Survey

\*\* Published Polls

## 2. Government Record

Our first 1982 Gallup 'tracking' study found a 'jump' in the level of approval for the record of the Government - up from the lowest level of approval since May 1979 that we found in the period 9/14 December. The 6/11 January survey found 23% approving of the record of the Government, 65% disapproving and 12% not having a view. As with voting intention we will need to wait for further surveys before attempting to draw any firm conclusions.

### GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1981</u>			
1/7 September	23	65	13
9/14 September	26	63	11
16/21 September	21	67	11
23/28 September	21	66	13
30 Sept/ 5 Oct	21	70	10
7/12 October	20	68	12
14/19 October	24	65	12
21/26 October	24	62	13
28 October/ 2 November	23	66	10
4/9 November	27	64	9
11/16 November	23	66	11
18/23 November	22	66	12
25/30 November	22	65	14
2/7 December	20	69	11
9/14 December	18	70	12
<u>1982</u>			
6/11 January	23	65	12

## 3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs Thatcher's popularity improved slightly in the first 1982 study - it is now back up to the level it was at in early December 1981. The survey found 30% satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 65% dissatisfied and 5% did not have a view. The survey found almost no change in the popularity of Mr Foot or Mr Steel.

(please see next page for table)

## 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.	sat.	Know		Not	Know		Not	Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1981</u>									
1/7 September	28	67	5	29	52	19	63	18	19
9/14 September	32	62	6	28	54	18	56	21	23
16/21 September	27	68	5	28	52	20	64	16	20
23/28 September	28	67	5	25	57	18	64	17	19
30 Sept/ 5 Oct	27	68	6	31	49	20	60	20	20
7/12 Oct	26	68	6	28	50	22	62	19	18
14/19 Oct	31	62	7	31	50	20	64	15	21
21/26 Oct	33	62	5	27	54	19	64	20	16
28 Oct/ 2 Nov	29	65	6	25	59	16	64	19	17
4/9 Nov	32	64	3	24	62	14	68	16	16
11/16 Nov	28	66	6	16	67	17	64	17	19
18/23 Nov	29	66	5	18	68	15	69	15	16
25/30 Nov	29	65	5	18	68	15	67	15	18
2/7 Dec	29	66	5	18	68	14	64	18	18
9/14 Dec	25	70	5	19	67	14	63	18	19
<u>1982</u>									
6/11 January	30	65	5	20	65	14	62	20	18

4. Published Polls(a) Marplan (Guardian 2nd January 1982)

The Guardian on 2nd January 1982 included a report of a Marplan survey conducted on 29th December 1981. The research looked at the electorate's reaction to the Government's record and their expectations for 1982.

Marplan asked what electors thought about the Government's performance in 1981 a range of policy areas and what they expected them in 1982. They found:-

Thinking about the Government's performance in 1981, for each of the following please say whether you think they have been successful or unsuccessful? And do you think they are likely to do better in 1982, or worse?

Base: full sample of 703 voters

	In 1981			Better	In 1982	
	Successful	Not Successful	Don't know		Worse	Don't know
Tackling Britain's economic problems	21	71	7	40	46	15
Restoring incentives by reducing personal tax liabilities	14	71	15	30	49	21
Improving law and order	35	56	9	47	36	17
Strengthening defence forces	37	44	18	42	33	25
Reforming trade union law	28	52	19	35	41	24
Rationalising publicly-owned industry	24	47	28	30	38	32
Improving Britain's lot in the EEC	42	45	13	43	40	18
Cutting local authority spending	56	39	5	44	45	11
Reducing the size of the Civil Service	45	41	14	40	39	20

Marplan found 71% of the electorate thought we had not been successful (21% successful) in 1981 in 'tackling Britain's economic problems' - 46% thought they would get worse in 1982 (40% better).

On 'restoring incentives by reducing personal tax liabilities' 71% thought the Government had not been successful (14% successful) in 1981 and 49% thought the position in this area would get worse in 1982 (30% better).

In the area of law and order 56% claimed the Government had not been successful (35% successful) in 'improving law and order' in 1981, 47% thought this would improve in 1982 (36% get worse).

44% thought we had not been successful (37% successful) in 'strengthening our defence forces'. 42% thought things would get better in 1982 - 33% worse.

In the field of trade union law reform, 52% claimed the Government had not been successful in 'reforming trade union law' in 1981 - 28% that it had been successful, 41% thought the Government would do worse in 1982 - 35% do better.

On the question of 'rationalising publicly owned industry', 47% thought we had not been successful (24% successful). 38% thought we will do worse in 1982 - 30% better.

45% thought we had not been successful in 'improving Britain's lot in the EEC' - 42% thought we had been successful. In 1982 43% thought we will do better - 40% worse.

56% thought we had been successful in 'cutting local authority spending' in 1981 - 39% not successful. 45% thought things in this area would get worse in 1982 - 44% get better.

45% thought we had been successful in 1981 in 'reducing the size of the Civil Service' - 41% not successful. 40% expected us to do better in 1982 - 39% do worse.

When looking at economic expectations in general, Marplan found only 4% of electors claiming ... 1981 had been a 'very good year for them and their families', 27% 'fairly good', 30% 'neither good nor bad', 29% 'bad' and 10% 'very bad'.

Looking ahead to 1982, 6% thought things for them would be 'a lot better' than in 1981, 27% 'a little better', 30% 'neither better nor worse', 24% 'a little worse' and 11% 'a lot worse'.

(b) NOP (Daily Mail January 6th 1982)

The Daily Mail on 6th January 1982 included the results of an NOP poll conducted in Glasgow Hillhead on January 5th. They found that 33% claimed they would vote Labour, 29% SDP/Liberal Alliance, 24% Conservative, 13% SNP and 1% for 'other parties'.

When asked how they would vote if Roy Jenkins was the Alliance candidate - 33% claimed they would vote Alliance, 31% Labour, 22% Conservative, 13% SNP and 1% for 'other parties'. When asked how they would vote if Mr Chick Brodie was Alliance candidate, NOP found 32% claiming they would vote Labour, 31% Alliance, 24% Conservative, 12% SNP and 1% for 'other parties'.

32% thought it 'very important' to have a candidate from Scotland, 30% 'fairly important', 20% 'not very important' and 15% 'not at all important'.

(c) Opinion Research Centre (Daily Record 8th January 1982)

The Daily Record on 8th January included the results of a Glasgow Hillhead survey carried out on January 5/6. They asked 'If Roy Jenkins is the Social Democrat /Liberal Alliance candidate, which party will you vote for?' - 36% claimed they would vote Alliance, 30% Labour, 21% Conservative, 8% SNP and 5% for 'other' parties. When the idea of Chick Brodie as Alliance candidate was put to them, 34% claimed they would vote Alliance, 31% Labour, 22% Conservative, 7% SNP and 6% for 'other' parties.

71% claimed they would be 'certain to vote', 16% they would 'probably vote', 3% 'they would probably not vote', 3% 'certainly not vote' and 7% did not know whether they would vote.

(d) Systems Three (Glasgow Herald 11th January 1982)

A Systems Three poll conducted for the Glasgow Herald and the Scottish TV programme 'Agenda' on January 9th found when no personalities were mentioned 25% claiming they would vote Labour, 23% Alliance, 16% Conservative and 8% SNP. When the idea of Mr Jenkins or Mr Brodie was introduced, support for the Alliance increased to 39% in both cases with support for Labour and Conservatives slipping back considerably.

(e) ORC (Weekend World 16th January 1982)

Weekend World on 16th January included the results of an ORC poll conducted between 14th and 21st December 1981. It found on a voting intention question:-

Conservative	29%
Labour	30%
Alliance	38%
Other	3%

Those who said they would vote Alliance, Labour or did not know how they would vote were asked if there was any chance that they might change their minds and vote Conservative at the next General Election. 19% said if changes took place they might consider it.

Six Conservative policies were put to this group - they were asked which would be the ones most likely to persuade them to vote Conservative.

## Top Issues

1. Denationalisation	1% mentioned
2. Law and Order	17% "
3. Curbing unions	16% "
4. Fighting inflation	12% "
5. Cutting taxes	9% "
6. Reducing unemployment	45% "

There were given a choice of saying what they thought the Government should do if it had a choice between:-

Fighting inflation	35% said they should make this priority
Reducing unemployment	65% said they should make this priority
or	
Cutting taxes	20% said they should make this priority
Creating jobs	80% said they should make this priority

Reducing unemployment is what the group of potential switchers wanted.

(f) MORI (Granada World in Action 18th January 1982)

An MORI survey conducted between January 7th and 9th and included in World in Action on 18th January looked at attitudes of trade unionists. They found 46% claimed they would vote Labour, 36% Alliance, and 14% Conservative. 45% thought Labour no longer represents the interests of working people. More than half (56%) believe that their union should not be affiliated to the Labour Party. Only 35% supported affiliation. MORI found roughly 20% of trade unionists would support the affiliation of their union to theSDP, nearly two thirds would oppose such a move.

On policy issues 58% supported British withdrawal from the EEC, 74% liked the idea of import controls 55% were against any interference with traditional trade union rights and 42% claimed to be in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament.