

Conservative Research Department

32 Smith Square Westminster SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9511

KB/sg-c

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

F

Mr Derek Howe
10 Downing Street
London SW1

20th October 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Derek,

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 86

The actual interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted before the start of the Conservative Party Conference. The survey found a fall in the level of support for Labour, no real change in the level of support for the Liberals and the Conservatives, but a sharp increase in support for the Social Democrats.

*Y
Kerr*

D. K. Britto

Enc.

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 861. Introduction

An N.O.P. opinion poll published in the Daily Mail on 16th October 1981 (and conducted 13/14th October) looked at attitudes in Croydon N.W. They found support for the three main candidates fairly evenly split with 36% of the electorate claiming they would vote for the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance candidate, 32% Labour and 31% Conservative. The errors inherent in any opinion poll mean that the findings in the N.O.P. survey were in effect showing the three main candidates being neck and neck, eight days before polling day.

The interviewing for our latest Gallup tracking study was conducted from 7th to 12th October - before our Party Conference started. The survey found a sharp fall in the level of support for Labour, no real change in the level of support for the Liberals and the Conservatives and a sharp increase in support for the Social Democrats. The improvement in the S.D. support takes them back to the level we found before the fall in support we found in last week's survey conducted 30th September 5th October. Support for the Conservative Party increased from 26% (30th September/5th October) to 27% 7/12 October. Labour support dropped from 38% (30th September/5th October) to 31% (7/12 October). Liberal support remained unchanged - 12% (30th September/5th October) to 12½% 7/12 October. Social Democratic support increased from 21% (30th September/5th October) to 26½% in the latest study (7/12 October).

VOTING INTENTION

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</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	-	5.0	-9.0
3/8 June	31.0	40.0	14.0	12.5	2.5	-9.0
9/15 June	29.5	37.5	18.0	12.5	2.5	-8.0**
16/22 June	32.0	37.0	15.5	13.0	2.5	-5.0
24/30 June	29.0	40.0	17.0	12.0	2.0	-11.0
1/6 July	30.5	39.5	14.0	13.0	3.0	-9.0
8/13 July	30.0	40.5	14.5	12.0	3.0	-10.5**
15/20 July	29.0	36.0	16.0	17.0	2.0	-7.0
22/27 July	26.0	38.0	13.0	21.0	2.0	-12.0
29 July/ 3 Aug	25.5	40.0	11.5	20.5	2.5	-14.5
5/10 August	27.0	36.0	15.0	18.0	4.0	-9.0
12/17 August	28.0	38.5	13.0	19.0	1.5	-10.5**
19/24 August	29.0	34.0	17.0	18.0	2.0	-5.0
26/31 August	26.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	2.0	-15.0
1/7 September	25.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	3.0	-16.0
9/14 September	32.0	36.5	11.5	17.5	2.5	-4.5 **
16/21 September	25.0	36.5	16.0	19.0	3.5	-11.5
23/28 September	24.5	33.5	16.5	24.0	1.5	-9.0
30th September/5th October	26.0	38.0	12.0	21.0	3.0	-12.0
7/12 October	27.0	31.0	12.5	26.5	3.0	-4.0

*First Gallup post-Election survey

**Published Polls

In addition to the standard voting intention question (which forms the basis of the analysis considered above) and does not include specific reference to any of the political parties - our Gallup tracking study includes two additional questions as to how respondents said they would vote if they could support (a) a Social Democrat candidate or (b) a Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance candidate. Details of answers we have obtained in response to these questions are shown below. It should be noted that these particular questions have not been re-calculated to exclude don't knows.

VOTING INTENTION IF

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

(including don't knows)

	<u>3/8</u>	<u>9/15</u>	<u>16/22</u>	<u>24/30</u>	<u>1/6</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/20</u>	<u>22/27</u>	<u>29 July</u>	<u>5/10</u>	<u>12/17</u>
	June	June	June	June	July	July	July	July	3 Aug	Aug	Aug
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	22	23	23	21	22	21	21	18	20	20	20
Labour	27	28	28	31	29	29	28	28	30	27	27
Liberal	9	12	11	11	8	9	11	9	7	8	8
Others	2	1	2	1½	2	2	2	1	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	23	20	19	19	20	20	23	29	26	25	26
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	17	16	16	16½	16	18	16	16	15	18	18

	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>	<u>1/7</u>	<u>9/14</u>	<u>16/21</u>	<u>23/28</u>	<u>30th Sept</u>	<u>7/12</u>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept	5th Oct	Oct
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	20	19	23	18	18	19	19
Labour	25	28	29	27	27	23	29	23
Liberal	11	9	10	7	11	11	8	8
Others	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
Social Democrat Party	25	24	25	24	27	30	25	30
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	16	18	15	18	15	17	17	18

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC/LIBERAL ALLIANCE

	<u>3/8</u>	<u>9/15</u>	<u>16/22</u>	<u>24/30</u>	<u>1/6</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/20</u>	<u>22/27</u>	<u>29 July</u>	<u>5/10</u>	<u>12/17</u>
	June	June	June	June	July	July	July	July	3 Aug	Aug	Aug
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	24	20	22	20	21	18	20	20	19
Labour	27	27	27	29	28	27	27	27	29	25	27
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
Social Dem. Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	32	30	28	32	28	31	33	37	33	33	33
Don't know/it depends	18	19	19	18	19	19	18	16	16	19	19

	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>	<u>1/7</u>	<u>9/14</u>	<u>16/21</u>	<u>23/28</u>	<u>30th Sept</u>	<u>7/12</u>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept	5th Oct	Oct
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	19	20	23	16	18	18	19
Labour	25	27	28	26	26	23	27	22
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	35	31	33	32	40	40	34	38
Don't know/it depends	18	22	18	18	16	19	19	19

Changes in support for the parties in answer to these questions closely parallels the changes in support for the parties we found in response to the standard unprompted voting intention question. Details of the answers to the three standard voting intention questions are given below:-

VOTING INTENTION QUESTIONS

	<u>Standard Voting Intention</u>			<u>Voting if Social Democratic Candidate</u>			<u>Voting if Social Democratic/ Liberal Alliance Candidate</u>		
	<u>23/28</u>	<u>30 Sept</u>	<u>7/12</u>	<u>23/28</u>	<u>30 Sept</u>	<u>7/12</u>	<u>23/28</u>	<u>30 Sept</u>	<u>7/12</u>
	Sept %	5 Oct %	Oct %	Sept %	5 Oct %	Oct %	Sept %	5 Oct %	Oct %
Conservative	22	23	23	18	19	19	18	18	19
Labour	30	33	27	23	29	23	23	27	22
Liberal	15	11	11	11	8	8	-	-	-
Social Democrat	21	19	23	30	25	30	-	-	-
SD/Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	34	38
Others	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2
Don't know	10	12	13	17	17	18	19	19	19

3. Government Record

For the fourth week in succession, our study found what amounts to no change in the level of approval for the record of the Government - 20% approved and 68% disapproved. Details are shown below:-

	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		
	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1981</u>			
3/8 June	26	60	14
7/15 June	26	63	11
16/22 June	29	59	12
24/30 June	23	67	10
1/6 July	24	63	13
8/13 July	23	66	11
15/20 July	23	66	11
22/27 July	23	66	11
29 July/ 3 August	23	65	12
5/10 August	23	64	13
12/17 August	23	66	11
19/24 August	26	64	10
26/31 August	23	64	13
1/7 September	23	65	13
9/14 September	26	63	11
16/21 September	21	67	11
23/28 September	21	66	13
30th Sept/5th Oct	21	70	10
7/12 October	20	68	12

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

All the changes in the public's approval of the three main party leaders in our latest study are within the bands of errors inherent in any survey.

Details are shown below:-

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1981</u>									
3/8 June	36	58	6	29	41	21	59	19	22
9/15 June	33	61	6	28	48	24	61	18	21
16/22 June	34	60	6	29	50	21	60	20	21
24/30 June	30	65	5	28	52	21	60	19	21
1/6 July	31	62	7	25	54	21	60	17	23
8/13 July	30	65	5	25	52	23	56	20	24
15/20 July	31	65	4	22	59	19	59	19	22
22/27 July	26	68	6	23	55	22	59	21	21
29 July/ 3 Aug	27	68	5	26	53	20	57	23	20
5/10 August	30	65	5	27	56	17	62	18	21
12/17 August	28	66	6	23	57	20	61	18	21
19/24 August	33	61	6	25	51	24	63	19	19
26/31 August	28	66	6	29	52	20	60	20	21
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
30th Sept/5th Oct	27	68	6	31	49	20	60	20	20
7/12 October	26	68	6	28	50	22	62	19	18

5. Published Polls(a) N.O.P. (Daily Mail 16th October 1981)

The Daily Mail on 16th October 1981 included a report of an NOP poll conducted in Croydon N.W. on October 13/14th. NOP interviewed 715 electors throughout Croydon N.W. They found support for the three main candidates fairly evenly split with 36% of the electorate claiming they would vote for the Liberal Social Democratic Alliance candidate, 32% Labour and 31% Conservative. The errors inherent in any opinion poll mean that the findings of the NOP survey are in effect showing all three candidates as being neck and neck eight days before polling.

NOP found Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance and Conservative voters claiming to be more determined to vote than Labour voters. They found the Alliance candidate picking up more voters from disaffected ex-Labour supporters than from ex-Conservative supporters.

(b) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 13th October 1981)

The Daily Telegraph on 13th October included the report of a Gallup survey conducted between September 30th and October 5th on attitudes towards the Conservative Party and Government.

Gallup asked electors whether their opinion of the Conservative Party has gone up or down since the General Election. They found:-

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>
	%	%	%
Gone up	5	6	8
Gone down	58	38	27
Same	35	53	60
Don't know	2	3	5

Almost two in three Conservatives (65%) said they had not changed their opinion, 14% said it had gone up and only 21% said it had gone down. It should be noted that this analysis is based only on those electors who support the Conservative Party at present.

Gallup asked people to select from a list of fourteen policy areas which, if any, they were disappointed with regard to the Government's performance.

	Disappointed with	
	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative Voters</u>
	%	%
Full employment	63	40
Taxation	40	25
Education	37	25
Old Age Pensions	37	23
Health Service	35	20
Economic and financial affairs generally	28	13
Housing	26	10
The Unions	24	36
Making things safer for people against crime and violence	24	29
Immigration	21	31
Common Market	19	11
The public services and civil servants	18	18
Defence and armaments	17	10
Roads	14	11
None of these	4	10

When asked whether people like themselves were better off or worse off than a year ago, the majority (64%) said they were worse off, 11% said that they were better off and 23% saw no change in their circumstances. Those who thought they were better off or worse off were then asked whether this was caused mainly by the Government or mainly by economic factors outside the Government's control. Gallup found:

<u>Due to:</u>	<u>Better Off</u>	<u>Worse Off</u>
	%	%
Government	24	38
Economic factors	35	25
Both	2	31
Neither	24	2
Don't know	15	4

/...

When Gallup asked whether electors opinion of Mrs Thatcher had gone up or down since she became Prime Minister, they found:-

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>
	%	%	%
Gone Up	16	19	24
Gone Down	59	42	33
Same	23	35	40
Don't know	2	4	3

Among existing Conservative voters there was a net balance of opinion in Mrs Thatcher's favour: 41% said their opinion had gone up and 23% it had gone down.

When Gallup asked respondents what they thought of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet, changes 49% agreed with the proposition that Mrs Thatcher had shown courage as a leader and put new life into her Government, 43% disagreed. 83% of Conservatives agreed.

When asked whether they thought Mrs Thatcher was right to replace Jim Prior as Minister of Employment - a third of the electors thought she was right and a third wrong. Among Conservative supporters 50% thought she was right and 17% wrong.

When asked whether they thought the Conservative Government had kept its election promises, Gallup found:-

	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Oct</u>
	1981	1980	1980
	%	%	%
Have	24	39	48
Have note	65	50	38
Don't know	11	11	14

Conservative supporters have greater confidence with 58% satisfied that the Government has kept its election promises - 33% are dissatisfied. When those respondents who said the Party had not kept its election promises were asked which ones they had in mind, the three most often mentioned were unemployment (38%), taxation (24%) and inflation (21%).

(c) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 14th October 1981)

The Daily Telegraph on 14th October 1981 included the result of a survey conducted from September 30th and October 5th on attitudes to public spending.

Gallup asked 'If the choice is between cutting taxes or cutting services, it would be better if charges were made from some services' - 62% agreed and 24% disagreed.

When asked about the balance between taxation and Government services that would be preferable, Gallup found:-

/...

	<u>Sept 1981</u> 1981 %	<u>Feb/March 1981</u> 1981 %
Taxes being cut even if it means some reduction in Government services such as health, education and welfare	23	20
Things should be left as they are	25	22
Government services such as health, education and welfare should be extended even if it means some increases in taxes	42	52
Don't know	10	6

(d) N.O.P. (Daily Mail 13th October 1981)

The NOP survey conducted on October 9/10th and published in the Daily Mail on 13th October looked at attitudes to the Government among Conservative supporters. NOP asked what they thought about the Government's performance in various areas of policy. They found:-

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
The economy (%)	39	52	9
Foreign Affairs (%)	68	14	18
Law and Order (%)	55	39	6
Defence (%)	61	29	10
Trade Unions (%)	43	47	10
Northern Ireland (%)	53	32	15

(e) NOP (Observer 18th October 1981)

The Observer on 18th October 1981 included a report on a survey carried out on 15th October.

NOP found that more than half (51%) of those interviewed said they would not be prepared to pay higher taxes so that the Government could spend more money on measures to reduce the level of unemployment, while 38% said they would be prepared to pay for such measures.

In terms of voting intention 35% claimed they would vote Liberal-S.D. Alliance, 32% Conservative and 30% Labour.

When asked whether the Government should change its economic policies - 63% thought it should, but only 19% think this will actually happen and 73% believe the policies will continue unchanged. Just over half of Conservative voters (52%) want the Government to stick to its present economic policies.

NOP found electors almost equally divided (45% for and 44% against) the idea of Britain leaving the EEC. Most Labour voters (63%) support the idea but Alliance voters are fairly evenly split (45% in favour of leaving, 47% against).

Opposition to Labour's policies of unilateral nuclear disarmament remains strong among the public - 65% against and only 28% in favour. Even Labour voters are against the policy - 52% against, 41% for.