

# Conservative Research Department

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CONFIDENTIAL

*Dear Derek,*

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 83

The interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted from 16th to 21st September and found an upward trend of support for both the Liberals and the Social Democrats. The interviewing for this survey was conducted before the Labour Party Conference got under way.

Support for the Conservative Party dropped back very sharply compared with results of the previous week's published survey.

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D. K. Britto

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(published 25th September 1981)

1. Introduction

The interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted from 16th to 21st September and they interviewed over 1,000 electors throughout Great Britain. Our unpublished survey found a return to the trend of support for the Conservative Party that existed before the Gallup study published in the Daily Telegraph (17th September and conducted 9/14 September). Our latest study found 25% of the electorate claiming they would vote Conservative (32% 9/14 September), 25% 1/7 September), 36½% Labour (36½% 9/14 September, 41% 1/7 September), 16% Liberal (11½% 9/14 September, 15% 1/7 September) and 19% Social Democrat (17½% 9/14 September, 16% 1/7 September). Labour's lead which dropped to 4½% in the Gallup poll conducted 9/14 September increased to 11½% in our latest study.

The survey was completed before the start of the Labour Party Conference and found both a sharp increase in the level of Liberal support and a small increase in the level of support for the Social Democrats. Details of the trend in support for the main parties since the beginning of June this year are shown in the table below. The figures are on the same basis as the voting intention figures published in the Daily Telegraph - they exclude don't knows.

VOTING INTENTION

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1979						
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

\* First Gallup post-Election survey

\*\* Published Polls

In addition to the standard voting intention question which does not include specific reference to any of the political parties, each Gallup tracking study includes two additional questions on how respondents claim they would vote if they could vote (a) for a Social Democratic candidate or (b) for a Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance candidate. Details of the trend of answers in response to these standard questions are shown below. It must be noted that unlike the analysis presented in the Daily Telegraph, these particular tables have not been re-calculated excluding 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>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept
	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	20	19	23	18
Labour	25	28	29	27	27
Liberal	11	9	10	7	11
Others	1	1	2	1	2
Social Democrat Party	25	24	25	24	27
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	16	18	15	18	15

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

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## Voting Intention if Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance (cont'd)

	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>	<u>1/7</u>	<u>9/14</u>	<u>16/21</u>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept
	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	19	20	23	16
Labour	25	27	28	26	26
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	1	2
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	35	31	33	32	40
Don't know/it depends	18	22	18	18	6

When Gallup asked respondents how they would vote if a Social Democrat candidate stood in their constituency - 27% claimed they would vote for such a candidate - the highest level of support for them found by this standard question since early April. When Gallup asked respondents how they would vote if a Liberal/Social Democrat Alliance candidate stood in their constituency 40% of the electorate (four out of ten) claimed they would vote for such a candidate. This is the highest level of support for such an alliance we have ever found. Details of the answers to the three standard voting intention questions are shown below:

VOTING INTENTION

(16/21 September 1981)

	<u>Standard</u> <u>Voting</u> <u>Intention</u>	<u>Voting if Social</u> <u>Democratic</u> <u>Candidate</u>	<u>Voting if Social Democratic/</u> <u>Liberal Alliance Candidate</u>
	%	%	%
Conservative	23	18	16
Labour	33	27	26
Liberal	14	11	-
Social Democrat	17	27	-
Social Democrat/Liberal	-	-	40
Others	3	2	2
Don't know	10	15	16

2. Government Record

Our latest tracking study found a sharp drop in the level of approval for the record of the Government - down from 26% approving of the record of the Government in the week 9/14 September to 21% in the week 16/21 September. Details are shown in the table on the following page.

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>			
3/8 June	26	60	14
9/15 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

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Drop in the level of Mrs Thatcher's popularity - back to about the level we found before last week's published study. No change in popularity of Mr. Foot but a sharp improvement in Mr. Steel's popularity.

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u> %	<u>Dis- sat.</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Is</u> %	<u>Is not</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Is</u> %	<u>Is not</u> %	<u>Don't 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

4. Published Polls

(a) N.O.P. (Daily Mail 25th September 1981)

The Daily Mail on 25th September included the results of an N.O.P. poll conducted on September 21st. The poll looked at attitudes to the candidates for Labour's Deputy Leadership elections and to aspects of Labour Party policies.

When N.O.P. asked respondents how they would vote if they had a vote in Labour's Deputy Leadership election, 57% said they would vote for Mr. Healey, 14% for Mr. Benn and 7% for Mr. Silkin. Among Labour voters 54% said they would vote for Mr. Healey, 24% for Mr. Benn and 8% for Mr. Silkin.

The N.O.P. survey found with an unprompted voting intention question that 34% of respondents claimed they would vote Conservative, 34% Labour, 11% Liberal, 15% Social Democrat and 4% SDP/Liberal Alliance.

When asked about attitudes to a number of left-wing Labour policies N.O.P. found:-

Q. Do you agree or disagree with reducing Britain's nuclear weapons regardless of what other countries do?

	All	Labour Voters	Trade Unionists
	%	%	%
Agree	34	50	38
Disagree	58	41	57
Don't know	8	9	5

Q. Should Britain be taken out of the Common Market?

Come out	46	71
Stay in	45	22
Don't know	9	7

Q. Should British troops be withdrawn from Northern Ireland?

Agree	53	68
Disagree	34	23
Don't know	13	9

Q. Should more Government money be used to reduce the level of unemployment?

Agree	75	93
Disagree	18	5
Don't know	7	2

(b) N.O.P. (Observer 27th September 1981)

An N.O.P. poll published in the Observer on 27th September, and conducted on 23rd September 1981 found Denis Healey being the clear favourite for the post of Deputy Leader.

When N.O.P. asked electors which of five possible candidates they would most like to see as leader of the Liberal/Social Democratic Alliance, 35% preferred David Steel, 26% Shirley Williams, 15% Roy Jenkins, 7% David Owen and 1% William Rogers.

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(c) Marplan (Guardian 25th September 1981)

A Marplan poll published in The Guardian on 25th September and conducted on September 17/18 looked at attitudes to the Labour Deputy Leadership elections. They found Mr. Healey was the most popular candidate amongst Labour supporters.

(d) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 29th September 1981)

The Daily Telegraph published on 29th September the results of a Gallup survey conducted in Croydon North West between September 25th and 27th. They found 27½% of the electorate claiming they would vote Conservative, 35% Labour and 36½% Liberal-Social Democratic. Among those electors who claimed they would definitely vote in the by-election (58% in the survey) Gallup found the Alliance and Labour neck and neck.

When asked about issues, 31% considered unemployment to be the most important local issue, 26% rates and 22% education. The survey found significant differences between the attitudes of supporters of the main parties with regard to answers to this question. For Conservative supporters the most important local issue was rates (mentioned by 38%) whilst among supporters of both Labour and the Alliance, unemployment was regarded as the most important issue.

Gallup also asked 'If Shirley Williams were the Liberal and Social Democrat Alliance candidate, would you be more likely to vote for the Alliance, less likely or would it make no difference'. They found:-

	<u>All</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>SDP/Liberal</u>
	Supporters	Supporters	Supporters	Supporters
	%	%	%	%
More likely	24	15	19	42
Less likely	12	16	12	10
No Difference	55	61	61	47
Don't know	9	8	8	1

(e) Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 27th September 1981)

The Sunday Telegraph on 27th September included the results of a Gallup survey on attitudes to the Labour Party conducted from 16th to 21st September. Gallup asked respondents how they would place the four main parties in terms of a left-right scale. They found:-

	<u>Left-Right</u>			
	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Social Democrat</u>
	Party	Party	Party	Party
	%	%	%	%
Far left	5	15	2	3
Substantially left	1	22	1	1
Moderately left	2	18	5	8
Slightly left	1	8	17	14
Slightly right	5	3	18	14
Moderately right	16	4	9	7
Substantially right	24	2	2	2
Far right	22	3	1	2
Middle of the road	1	2	13	9

The electorate sees the Conservative Party as being right wing, Labour left wing and both the Liberals and the Social Democrats as being parties of the centre.

86% of respondents saw Labour as being a divided party. 28% thought they were divided because of fighting amongst themselves, 12% because of conflict between moderates and extreme left, 12% on the leadership issue, 12% because far left attempting to take over and 10% because of Tony Benn.

When asked about Mr. Foot as leader of the Labour Party, 42% wanted him to carry on, 45% be replaced by someone else and 13% did not have a view. When asked who would replace him as leader, 40% selected Denis Healey and 10% Tony Benn. When asked to select from a list of Labour leaders any they would not like to see lead Labour - 56% selected Tony Benn, 16% Denis Healey and 10% Peter Shore.

On the question of the close relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions, 52% thought it was a good thing, 35% a bad thing and 13% did not have a view.

Gallup asked respondents what changes they thought Labour would make if they won the next election. They found:-

Changes if Labour Won Election

	<u>More</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Direct Taxation (e.g. Income Tax (%)	35	24	27	14
Union Power (%)	59	7	25	8
Government help for the nationalised industries (%)	73	7	10	10
Unemployment (%)	19	40	31	10
Government control over people's lives (%)	34	18	33	15
Control of Incomes (%)	41	18	25	16
Inflation (%)	36	25	26	13
Personal Freedom (%)	18	23	44	14
Encouragement for Small Business(%)	37	36	17	11
Immigrants (%)	25	23	38	14
Law and Order (%)	24	18	49	9
Industrial Disputes	29	33	28	10

When asked whether four policies would make them more or less favourably inclined towards Labour, Gallup found 48% thought a joint Labour Party/ Trade Union view on economic policy would make them more favourably inclined towards Labour. 54% thought a policy of pulling British troops out of Northern Ireland would make them more favourably inclined towards Labour, 50% thought a policy of taking Britain out of the Common Market would make them more favourably inclined towards Labour. 37% said a policy of having no nuclear weapons based in Britain would make them more favourably inclined towards Labour - 41% said such a policy would make them less favourably inclined.