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KB/SEN

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr. Richard Ryder,
10 Downing Street,
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14th May 1980

Dear Richard,

Public Opinion Background Note 15

I attach a copy of the latest background note on the results from our tracking study. May I draw your attention to the jump in Liberal support shown in our latest study. It is of course far too early to say whether this increase in Liberal support marks the start of a trend but it is clearly something we will need to watch.

[Signature]
Kent

D.K. Britto.

Enc.

Confidential

Public Opinion Background Note 15
(Produced 11th May 1980)

1. Introduction

Our latest Gallup "tracking" study conducted between 30th April and 6th May 1980 found a 3% Labour lead compared with 5% in our previous tracking study (conducted 23/28th April) and 8½% in the latest published Gallup figures.

2. Voting Intention

Trends in support for the main parties as found in our "tracking" study are shown below:-

Voting Intention

	<u>Con</u> %	<u>Lab</u> %	<u>Lib</u> %	<u>Other</u> %	<u>Lead</u> %
May 1979(GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	5.5	+7.0
13/18 June 1979*	42	43½	12	2½	-1½
<u>1980</u>					
11/17 March	37	49	11½	2	-12½ **
20/24 March	38	45½	13½	2	-7½
27/31 March	40	43	14	3	-3
2/8 April	39	45	13	3	-6
10/14 April	36½	45	15	3½	-8½ **
16/21 April	41	43	14½	1½	-2
23/38 April	39	44	14	3	-5
30/6 May	39	42	17	2	-3

*First Gallup post-election survey

** Published poll

The fluctuations in support for the parties shown in recent weeks make it almost impossible to perceive a clear trend in support - except to note the fairly consistent fall in Labour's support since early March and a sharp jump in Liberal support in our latest study. It is of course far too early to say whether this increase in Liberal support marks the start of a trend.

3. Government Record

Our latest tracking study found an increase in government popularity - but not back to the level reached in mid April. As with voting intention, the standard government record questions do not show any particularly clear trends in recent weeks.

Government Record

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%
13/18 June 1979*	34	41	25
<u>1980</u>			
11/17 March	30	59	11
20/24 March	32	56	12
27/31 March	38	49	13
2/8 April	36	51	13
10/14 April	36	52	12
16/21 April	38	50	12
23/28 April	34	54	12
30 April/5 May	36	51	13

*First post-election survey

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Sharp increase in Mrs. Thatcher's popularity but not in that of other leaders.

Popularity of Political Leaders

	<u>Mrs. Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr. Callaghan</u>			<u>Mr. Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dissat.</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dissat.</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dissat.</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
11/17 March	38	59	6	53	35	12	60	19	21
20/24 March	40	56	5	51	34	15	60	18	22
27/31 March	41	49	7	53	35	12	60	18	22
2/8 April	40	51	6	56	31	12	55	19	26
10/14 April	41	54	5	55	33	12	60	19	21
16/21 April	43	51	7	52	34	14	59	17	25
23/28 April	40	54	6	52	33	14	57	18	25
30/6 May	45	51	5	53	32	15	57	17	26

5. Communication

In the week 30th April to 5th May we found 25% of the electorate claiming to have heard or seen something making them more favourably inclined towards the Government in the previous seven days (13% 23/28th April) and 18% claiming to have heard or seen something making them less favourably inclined towards the Government (23% 23/28th April). Reasons given by the more favourably inclined towards the Government included EEC/Common Market Conference 17%, Mrs. Thatcher 9% and support for the U.S.A. on Iran 2% and handling of the siege 3%. On the less favourably inclined side reasons included EEC/Common Market Conference 5%, cost of living 3%, support for America on Iran 3% and public spending cuts 2%.

6. Published Polls

(a) M.O.R.I. - New Statesman

The report on M.O.R.I. analysis of the findings of some of their recent polls confirms the findings from our tracking study - that we have losing support heavily among the C2 (skilled working class group). See below for details:-

HOW THEY ARE VOTING NOW

	ALL Voters %	SEX		AGE			CLASS			TR. UNION		
		Men %	Women %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-54 %	55+ %	ABC1 %	C2 %	DE %	Mbrs. %	Not %
% of voters, May 79	100	51	49	12	21	31	36	35	34	31	30	70
VOTING INTENTION NOW												
Con	39	37	40	30	36	41	42	56	32	24	27	44
Lab	45	47	43	52	46	42	45	26	53	62	57	40
Lib	14	13	15	14	15	14	12	16	13	12	13	14
Con Lead now	-6	-10	-3	-22	-10	-1	-3	30	-21	-38	-30	4
Con Lead May 79	7	3	12	1	5	11	9	35	0	15	-18	18
Swing to Lab since May 79	6½	6½	7½	11½	7½	6	6	2½	10½	11½	6	7
Swing to Con Oct 74-May 79	5	7	5½	9½	5	9½	3½	-1	11½	10	7	6
Swing to Lab Oct 74-now	+1½	-½	+2	+2	+2½	-3½	+2½	+3½	-1	+1½	-1	+1

N.B. The figures compare 5,672 respondents' voting intentions measured April-May 1979 (weighted to election outcome) with aggregate of MORI polls in Jan-Feb-March 1980 (n = 5,617).

(b) N.O.P. Poll

An N.O.P. Poll published in the Daily Mail (May 9th) and conducted when the siege of the Iranian Embassy was at its height found more than one in three electors in Britain thinking that we should resist Russian expansion even if this means war.

On the questions of sanctions against Russia N.O.P. found:-

What action, if any, do you think the United States and Europe should take against Russia?

	<u>U.S.</u> (%)	<u>Europe</u> (%)
No action	17	24
Reduce Trade with U.S.S.R.	30	27
Boycott Moscow Olympics	27	24
Stop trade with U.S.S.R.	26	20
Break diplomatic links	18	13

(c) N.O.P. Poll

An N.O.P. Poll published in the Daily Mail (May 12th) and conducted on 1st/2nd May found 64% of the electorate saying they would vote to leave the Common Market if a referendum was held now. Details below:-

Vote on Referendum on EEC Membership

	<u>All</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>
	%	%	%	%
Stay in	28	42	16	38
Get out	64	49	76	59
Don't know	8	9	8	3

67% of those interviewed agreed with Mrs. Thatcher's stand on the EEC Budget.

This poll found a Labour lead of 2% (43% Conservative 45% Labour, 10% Liberal and 3% others) in terms of voting intention.

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12.5.80