

# Conservative Research Department

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

KB/sgc

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr Derek Howe  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

24th February 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

*Dear Derek,*

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 53

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday 19th February. The standard Gallup voting intention question actually found a ½% Conservative lead - the first lead in a published Gallup poll since immediately after the Election. This lead should be treated with caution as it does not fully take account of the potential support for a hypothetical Social Democratic or Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance. The Gallup survey included some questions looking at the potential level of support for such a new party or alliance. In their latest study they found one in five of the electorate saying they would vote for a Social Democratic Party if they put up candidates against the other parties, and more than one in three of the electorate saying they would vote for a Social Democratic/Liberal Party Alliance candidate.

*How*  
*Heath*  
D. K. Britto

Enc.

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 53

(produced 20th February 1981)

1. Introduction

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday 19th February 1981. The interviewing for the research was conducted from 10th to 16th February and Gallup actually found a ½% Conservative lead, the first they have found in a published poll since just after the General Election. It must however be pointed out that a Conservative lead has been found on one previous occasion since the General Election in one of our private 'tracking' studies and the possibility of strong support for a Social Democratic Party does cast some doubt on the reliability of the traditional voting intention question. Having said this, the standard voting intention question in the latest Gallup study confirms yet again the results from our private 'tracking' studies that one in five electors claim they would vote Liberal. The published Gallup survey also included the same questions as in our last private 'tracking' study looking at whether the electorate would vote for (a) a Social Democratic Party Candidate and (b) a Candidate standing under a Social Democratic/ Liberal alliance.

VOTING INTENTION

(including Don't Knows)

	<u>Standard Voting Intention</u>		<u>Voting Intention if Social Democratic Candidate</u>		<u>Voting Intention if Social Democratic/ Liberal Candidate</u>	
	<u>3/9 Feb</u> %	<u>10/16 Feb</u> %	<u>3/9 Feb</u> %	<u>10/16 Feb</u> %	<u>3/9 Feb</u> %	<u>10/16 Feb</u> %
Conservative	31	32	21	23	21	22
Labour	35	31	25	23	24	22
Liberal	18	17	11	12	-	-
Others	7	8	2	2	2	2
Social Democratic Party	-	-	22	21	-	-
Social Democratic/ Liberal alliance	-	-	-	-	33	36
Don't know/it depends	9	12	19	16	19	18

N.B. This note normally excludes don't knows (figures are recalculated). It should be noted that this table includes don't knows as a separate category.

The latest study found in opinion research terms no significant change in levels of support for either a hypothetical Social Democratic Party or an equally hypothetical Social Democratic/Liberal alliance between the surveys conducted 3/9 February and 10/16 February. In the latest study Gallup found that one in five electors said they would vote for a Social Democratic candidate when the option was specifically put to them. When they had the option of voting for a Social Democratic/Liberal candidate more than one in three electors said they would vote for a candidate

/...

standing for such an alliance.

The Gallup analysis of the latest study shows that of those who answered the standard voting intention question and said they would vote Conservative 12% (13% in the period 3/9 Feb) said they would vote for a new Social Democratic Party when the option was put to them, among Labour supporters 14% (15% in the period 3/9 Feb) said they would do the same and among Liberal supporters 24% (31% in the period 3/9 Feb). When we asked about a possible Social Democratic /Liberal alliance 18% (12% 3/9 Feb) of previous Conservative supporters said they would support such an alliance, 20% (22% 3/9 Feb) of previous Labour supporters and 80% (80% 3/9 Feb) of previous Liberal supporters.

## 2. Voting Intention

	<u>CON</u> %	<u>LAB</u> %	<u>LIB</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	2.5	-1.5
<u>1980</u>					
1/6 Oct	40.0	43.0	13.5	3.5	-3.0**
8/14 Oct	35.5	41.5	20.0	3.0	-6.0
15/20 Oct	40.5	43.0	14.0	2.5	-2.5**
22/27 Oct	37.5	42.0	18.0	2.5	-4.5
29 Oct/3 Nov	34.5	47.5	16.0	2.0	-13.0
5/10 Nov	41.5	40.5	14.0	4.0	+1.0
12/17 Nov	36.5	47.0	15.0	1.5	-10.5**
19/24 Nov	35.0	48.0	14.0	2.0	-13.0
26 Nov/1 Dec	35.0	49.5	13.0	2.5	-14.5
3/8 Dec	35.0	47.0	14.5	3.5	-12.0
10/15 Dec	35.0	47.5	14.5	3.0	-12.5**
<u>1981</u>					
7/12 Jan	34.0	48.0	15.0	3.0	-14.0
14/20 Jan	33.0	46.5	18.5	2.0	-13.5**
21/26 Jan	35.5	43.0	17.0	4.5	-7.5**
28 Jan/ 2 Feb	32.0	40.0	21.5	6.5	-8.0
3/9 Feb	34.0	39.0	20.0	7.0	-5.0
10/16 Feb	36.0	35.5	20.0	8.5	+0.5**

\* First Gallup post-election survey

\*\* Published polls

As considered above the standard voting intention shows a ½% Conservative lead, the first lead in published polls since immediately after the election.

3. Government Record

Slight but not significant improvement in Government popularity in our latest study - but still six out of ten electors disapprove of the record of the Government to date.

	<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>1980</u>			
1/6 Oct	30	57	13
8/14 Oct	32	55	13
15/20 Oct	34	54	12
22/27 Oct	29	60	11
29 Oct/3 Nov	30	59	12
5/10 Nov	32	54	14
12/17 Nov	29	60	11
19/24 Nov	27	60	13
26 Nov/1 Dec	27	62	11
3/8 Dec	26	64	11
10/15 Dec	29	59	12
<u>1981</u>			
7/12 Jan	27	61	12
14/20 Jan	26	63	11
21/26 Jan	28	58	14
28 Jan/2 Feb	26	62	12
3/9 Feb	27	60	13
10/16 Feb	29	60	11

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Almost no change in popularity of Mrs Thatcher but slight improvement in Mr Steel's popularity and Mr Foot remains the most unpopular Leader of the Opposition Gallup have found since they started asking the standard question in the 1950's.

Please see following page for details.

## 4. Popularity of Political Leaders (continued)

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>1980</u>									
1/6 Oct	38	66	5	-	-	-	56	20	25
8/14 Oct	37	58	5	-	-	-	60	16	24
15/20 Oct	38	56	6	-	-	-	57	20	24
22/27 Oct	37	57	6	-	-	-	50	34	16
29 Oct/3 Nov	35	58	7	-	-	-	55	18	26
5/10 Nov	39	53	8	-	-	-	49	17	34
12/17 Nov	34	60	6	38	38	24	54	22	23
19/24 Nov	32	63	5	41	37	22	58	20	22
26 Nov/1 Dec	32	63	5	38	39	23	54	18	27
3/8 Dec	33	62	5	28	33	39	58	18	24
10/15 Dec	35	59	6	30	35	35	59	17	24
<u>1981</u>									
7/12 Jan	33	61	6	24	39	36	56	21	23
14/20 Jan	31	63	5	26	42	32	63	19	18
21/26 Jan	34	61	5	23	43	34	57	19	21
28 Jan/2 Feb	32	63	6	21	46	33	62	17	21
3/9 Feb	35	60	6	24	49	27	60	19	21
10/16 Feb	34	60	6	22	49	30	64	16	20

5. Published Polls(a) Audience Selection (Sun February 19th 1981)

An Audience Selection poll published in the Sun on February 19th and conducted by telephone on Tuesday 17th February looked at public attitudes to the mining industry. They found 56% (62% of trade unionists) agreeing with the idea of the Government providing subsidies to support the pits the Coal Board want to close - 44% disagreed (38% of trade unionists). An overwhelming majority of electors supported the idea of stopping the import of cheap coal - 84%.

The electorate was divided on whether the Coal Board should be given more money to subsidise pits with 46% agreeing 'Mrs Thatcher should intervene and provide subsidies to stop the pit closures going ahead' and 43% agreeing 'Mrs Thatcher should stand firm and tell the Coal Board that no money will be forthcoming from the Government!'. The electorate was also split on how they would vote in a referendum on whether the Government should provide subsidies to stop pits being closed - 46% would vote for subsidies and 44% against.

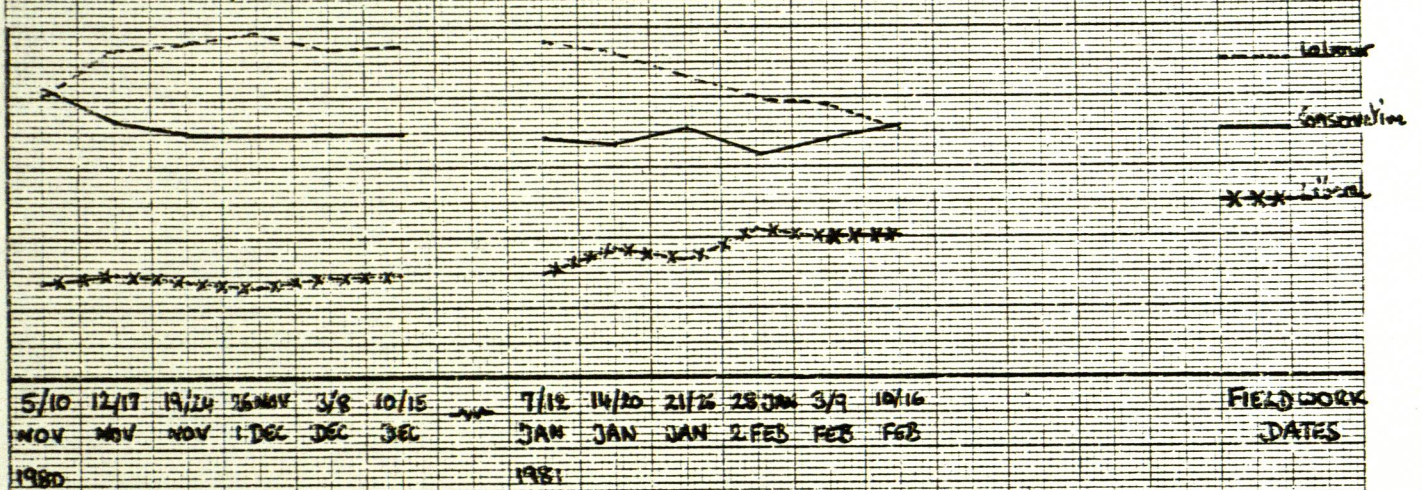
/...

(b) Audience Selection (Capital Radio 17th February 1981)

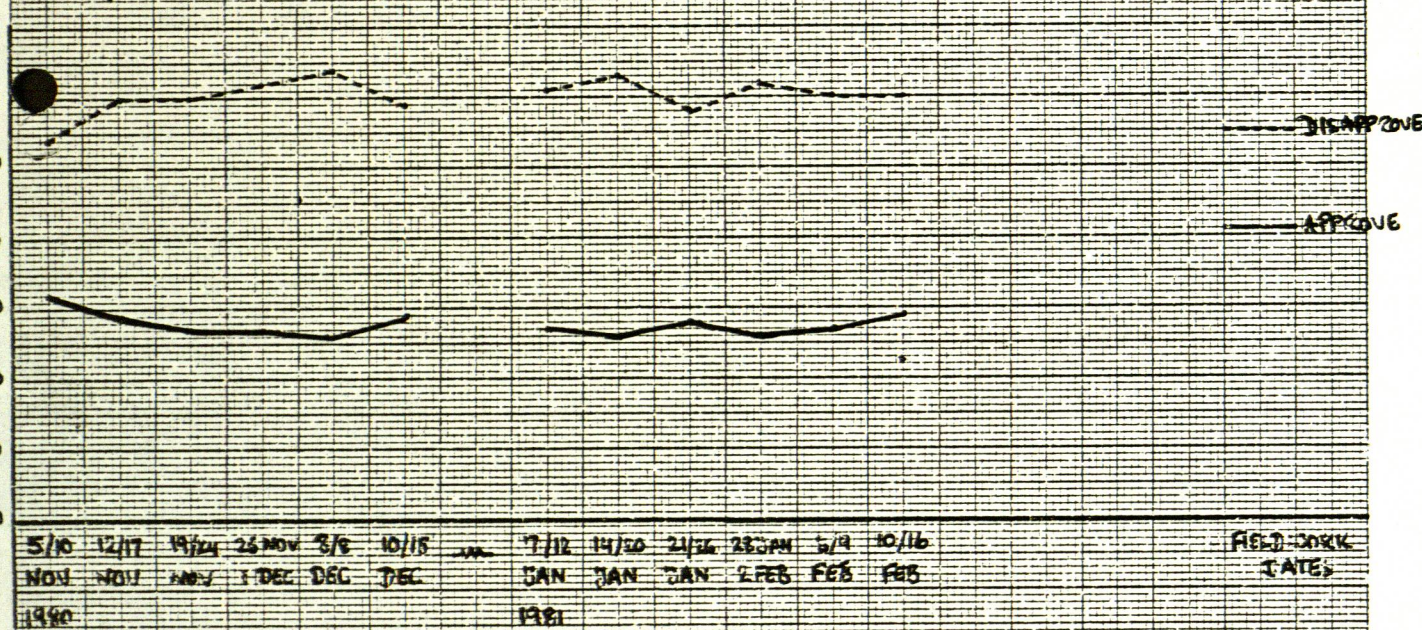
An Audience Selection poll used on Capital Radio on 17th February 1981 looked at public attitudes in London. The survey was conducted on 16th February by telephone. It should be noted that telephone interviews probably (this cannot be proved) biases a survey towards us. The Audience Selection poll found that in London 38% of the electorate said they would vote Conservative in the G.L.C. elections, 43% Labour, 15% Liberal and 4% for other parties. When the idea of a Social Democratic candidate in the G.L.C. elections was introduced they found 28% saying they would vote Conservative, 15% Liberal, 30% Labour, 25% Social Democratic and 2% for other parties.

# BACKGROUND GRAPHS

## VOTING INTENTION



## GOVERNMENT RECORD



## POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

