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CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Derek,

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PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 88

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study were the same as the Gallup figures published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday 29th October. The actual interviewing for this survey was completed largely after the Croydon N.W. by-election.

The survey found a sharp further increase in support for the Social Democrats - taking it up to the highest level found in any published Gallup study.

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PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 88

(produced 31st October 1981)

1. Introduction

The results of our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as the Gallup figures published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday 29th October. The interviewing for this study was conducted from 21st to 29th October - largely after the Croydon N.W. by-election. The survey found 29½% of the electorate claiming they will vote Conservative, 28% Labour and 26½% Social Democrat. Given the errors inherent in opinion research (around plus or minus three percentage points on any figure) these results are showing the three main parties approximately equal in terms of support.

Support for the Conservative Party has edged up slightly since mid-September. Support for Labour is at its lowest level in any published poll since mid-1968. Liberal support has over recent weeks shown no sign of a significant upward movement. Support for the Social Democrats on this unprompted question is the highest in any published survey, although one of our private 'tracking' studies found the same level of support in early October.

Details of the trend in support for the main parties on the standard Gallup unprompted voting intention question from both our unpublished 'tracking' studies and Gallup's published polls are shown in the table below:-

VOTING INTENTION

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>
	%	%	%	<u>DEMOCRAT</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
<u>1980</u>						
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
30 Sept/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
14/19 October	28.5	34.0	12.5	22.0	3.0	-5.5
21/25 October	29.5	28.0	13.5	26.5	2.5	-1.5 **

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

The trend of support in response to the two prompted Gallup tracking questions are shown below - the trend is similar to that in the unprompted voting intention question.

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>	<u>14/19</u>	<u>21/26</u>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept	5th Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	20	19	23	18	18	19	19	22	23
Labour	25	28	29	27	27	23	29	23	25	21
Liberal	11	9	10	7	11	11	8	8	9	9
Others	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1
Social Democrat Party	25	24	25	24	27	30	25	30	25	31
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	16	18	15	18	15	17	17	18	18	14

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>	<u>14/19</u>	<u>21/26</u>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept	5th Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	19	20	23	16	18	18	19	22	23
Labour	25	27	28	26	26	23	27	22	25	20
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	35	31	33	32	40	40	34	38	33	39
Don't know/it depends	18	22	18	18	16	19	19	19	18	16

2. Government Record

The latest 'tracking' study found no change in the level of approval of the record of the Government - 24% of electors approve of our record to date and 62% disapprove. Details are shown below. 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
23/28 September	21	66	13
30th Sept/5th Oct	21	70	10
7/12 October	20	68	12
14/19 October	24	65	12
21/26 October	24	62	13

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Our latest survey found a slight improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity, a sharp fall in Mr Foot's popularity and no change in Mr Steel's popularity. Details given below:

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
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
14/19 October	31	62	7	31	50	20	64	15	21
21/26 October	33	62	5	27	54	19	64	20	16

4. Published Polls(i) Gallup (Daily Telegraph - 29th October 1981)

The Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on 29th October 1981 and conducted from 21st to 26th October, in addition to the standard tracking questions, also included a range of other questions on public attitudes.

(a) Most Urgent Problems

Gallup asked respondents 'What would you say is the most urgent problem facing the country at the present time?' 89% mentioned unemployment, 36% cost of living, 11% economic problems, 9% defence/nuclear weapons, 6% law and order and 5% housing/rates. The table below shows what supporters of the main parties think are the main problems the country faces:-

Most Urgent Problems Facing the Country

	<u>All</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Social Democrat</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Unemployment	89	84	92	91	89
Cost of Living	36	39	35	33	36
Economic Problems	11	14	5	11	14
Defence/Nuclear Weapons	9	8	9	7	12
Law and Order	6	9	4	3	4
Housing/Rates	5	5	5	5	5

(b) Views on a General Election

When Gallup asked 'Do you think there should be a General Election in the near future or should the Government carry on?' - 53% wanted an election now, 43% wanted the Government to carry on and 4% did not have a view.

When asked 'Irrespective of how you yourself will vote, who do you think will win the next General Election?' - 14% thought the Conservatives, 39% Labour, 21% the Social Democrats, 3% the Liberals and 23% did not have a view.

(c) Attitudes to Policies/Leaders

Gallup found that the Conservatives are thought to have the best policies and the best leader, though the proportion saying this about the Social Democrats has doubled over the past months.

<u>Best Policies</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Sept</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Best Leaders</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Sept</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Feb</u>
	1981	1981	1981	1981		1981	1981	1981	1981
	%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%
Conservative	31	30	23	29		35	32	28	33
Labour	25	30	28	29		20	25	22	25
Liberal	9	10	11	14		14	14	14	16
Social Democrat	15	8	6	2		16	7	6	1
Other	1	8	6	2		0	7	6	1
Don't know	19	22	32	26		17	22	30	25

(d) Labour/Conservative United/Divided

Gallup found that 33% of the electorate saw the Conservative Party as being united and 60% divided. 85% saw the Labour Party as being divided and only 10% united.

(ii) Audience Selection (The Sun 29th October 1981)

The Sun on 29th October included the results of an Audience Selection poll conducted on October 27th. The survey looked at attitudes among British Leyland workers to the current dispute. They found:-

Q. Should the workers at BL accept or refuse the latest 3.8 per cent pay offer plus bonus?

	Total %	Longbridge %	Cowley %	T & G %	AEU %
Should refuse	78	73	83	81	76
Should accept	18	24	13	15	19
Don't know	4	3	4	4	5

Q. If a strike is called on Monday next, will you yourself take part?

Yes	86	82	90	90	85
No	10	14	6	7	10
Don't know	4	4	4	3	5

Q. If a strike is called do you believe that Michael Edwardes will close down (or try to sell off) British Leyland?

Will close	29	33	24	28	25
Won't close	56	52	60	55	57
Don't know	15	15	16	17	18