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KB/sgc

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr Derek Howe
10 Downing Street
London SW1

17th February 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Derek,

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 52

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are summarised in the attached note. The note includes results from the first of what will be a regular series of 'tracking' questions looking at public support for a hypothetical Social Democratic Party or an equally hypothetical Social Democratic/Liberal alliance.

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D. K. Britto

Atc.

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 52

(produced 14th February 1981)

1. Introduction

Our latest Gallup tracking study was conducted from 3rd to 9th February and in addition to our standard questions we included two questions which will be asked on a regular basis in order to provide a measure of public support for a Social Democratic Party or a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance. Our standard voting intention question - 'if there was a General Election tomorrow which Party would you support' showed Labour's lead dropping to 5% (excluding Don't Knows) and Liberal support remaining at 20% (21½% in previous week - 28 Jan/2nd Feb). The table below shows the result of the standard voting intention question compared with our new tracking questions as to whether respondents would vote (a) for a Social Democratic Party Candidate and (b) for a Candidate standing under a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance.

VOTING INTENTION
(including Don't Knows)

	<u>Standard</u> <u>Voting</u> <u>Intention</u> %	<u>Voting Intention</u> <u>if Social Democratic</u> <u>Candidate</u> %	<u>Voting Intention</u> <u>if Social Democratic</u> <u>/Liberal Candidate</u> %
Conservative	31	21	21
Labour	35	25	24
Liberal	18	11	-
Others	7	2	2
Social Demoratic Party	-	22	-
Social Democratic Liberal Alliance	-	-	33
Don't Know/ It Depends	9	19	19

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.

Our new Gallup tracking questions permit us to look at the origins of support for both a Social Democratic Party and a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance. The Gallup analysis shows that of those who answered the standard voting intention question and said they would vote Conservative 13% said they would vote for a new Social Democratic Party when the option was put to them, among Labour supporters 15% said they would do the same and among Liberal supporters 31%. When we asked about a possible Social Democratic/Liberal alliance 12% of previous Conservative supporters said they would support such an alliance, 22% of previous Labour supporters and 80% 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

*First Gallup post-election survey

** Published polls

As pointed out above, Labour's lead has narrowed but Liberal support remains high.

3. Government Record

As with last week's survey almost no change in popularity of Government.

Please see following page for details.

3. Government Record (continued)

	<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

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

A slight but probably not statistically significant improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity is present in our latest study. Mr Foot's popularity has also improved but we still have a situation in which fewer than one in four electors approve of his role as Leader of the Opposition.

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-</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Don't</u>
	%	sat.	Know	%	Not	Know	%	Not	Know
<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

5. Published PollsOpinion Research and Communication (Tuesday 9th February 1981)

The Times on 9th February 1981 included the results of an O.R.A.C poll conducted for them between January 31st and February 2nd. The findings from this survey with regard to both the standard voting intention question and the likelihood of voting for a hypothetical party Social Democratic or a hypothetical Social Democratic/Liberal alliance are shown below.

VOTING INTENTION IF:

	We have the traditional party line up	We have a breakaway social democratic party	We have a new centre party composed of breakaway Labour supporters and the Liberals
Conservative	28	20	21
Labour	35	27	27
Liberal	21	16	-
Others	4	2	2
Social democrats	-	25	-
Centre party	-	-	39
Undecided	11	6	10
Refused	2	4	1

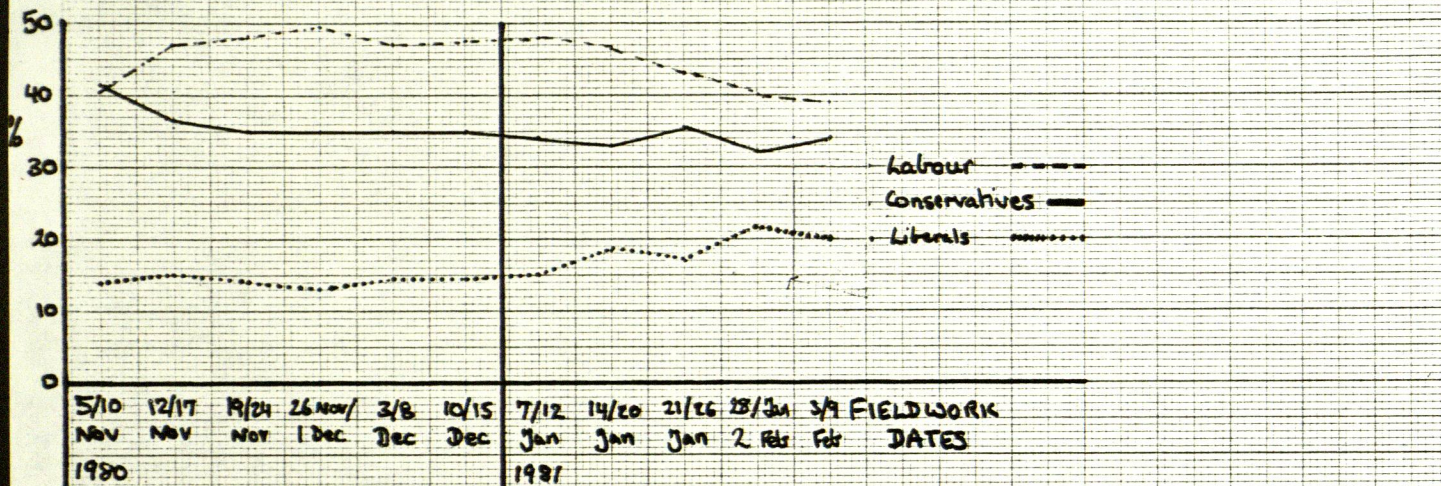
O.R.A.C. asked their respondents about what they thought about aspects of the present British political system and found a significant degree of unease about how it is working. Details are given below:-

Attitudes to How the Political System is Working

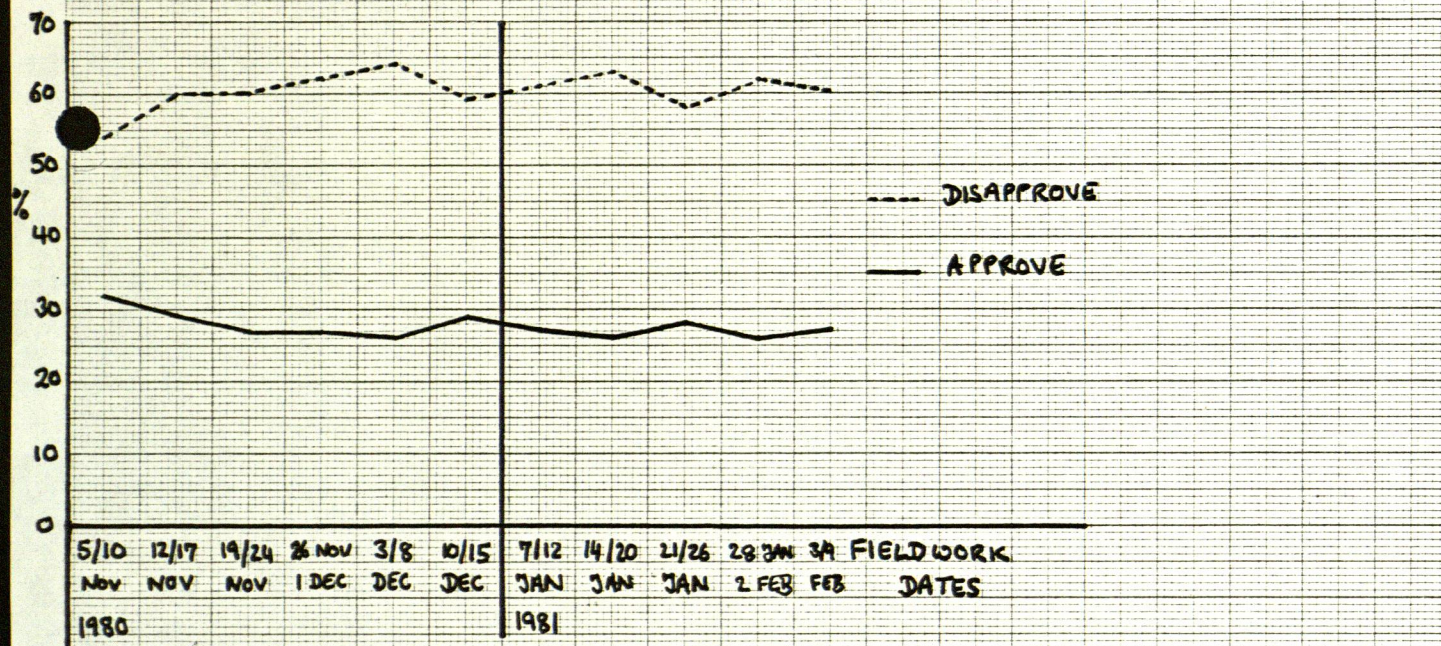
	<u>Jan'80</u>	<u>Feb'80</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Trade Union Member</u>
	<u>All</u>	<u>All</u>				
The present political system no longer works properly:						
Agree	53	58	37	61	71	58
Disagree	34	34	53	32	24	34
Don't Know	13	8	10	7	5	8
The present political system works fairly well and there is no need for any changes in the political parties:						
Agree	-	29	47	27	17	32
Disagree	-	63	43	65	76	63
Don't Know	-	8	10	8	7	5
The Labour Party is moving too much to the left for my liking:						
Agree	60	69	86	51	76	70
Disagree	22	14	4	30	6	20
Don't Know	18	16	10	19	18	10
The Conservative Party is moving too much to the right for my liking:						
Agree	46	52	32	65	58	63
Disagree	34	25	52	12	15	19
Don't Know	20	23	16	23	27	17
The trade unions have too much power over the Labour Party:						
Agree	75	79	95	60	87	72
Disagree	17	12	1	29	5	19
Don't Know	8	9	4	11	8	9
Business and industry have too much power over the Conservative Party:						
Agree	40	36	23	44	39	45
Disagree	38	43	65	30	39	41
Don't Know	22	21	12	26	22	14

BACKGROUND GRAPHS

VOTING INTENTION



GOVERNMENT RECORD



POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

