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Conservative Research Department

32 Smith Square, London SW1.

~~24 Old Queen Street, London SW1 9HX Telephone 01-222 9511~~

KB/SEN

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr. Richard Ryder,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1.

26th February 1980

Confidential

Dear Richard,

Weekly Public Opinion Note

I thought a copy of a brief note that I produced as background for Alan Howarth's Monday morning political meeting might be of interest. The meeting is normally attended by Norman Strauss from Number 10.

I will normally, unless I hear to the contrary, send you a copy of this note on a regular basis.

*Yours
D.K.*

D.K. Britto.

Enc.

Confidential

Public Opinion - Background Note 4
(Produced 24th February 1980)

1. This background note is based largely on the results of our latest Gallup "tracking" study completed on 18th February 1980.

2. Voting Intention

Our latest tracking study showed a narrowing of Labour's lead from the 4½% (published in the Daily Telegraph 14th February) to 3% in our latest private tracking study completed on Monday 18th February 1980. As can be seen from the detailed figures below, support for Labour remained almost constant whilst there was a small increase in support for the Conservatives and a small drop in support for the Liberals.

Voting Intention

	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Liberal</u> %	<u>Other</u> %	<u>Lead</u> %
9-14 Jan	36	45	16	3	-9
17-22 Jan	38	42	17	3	-4
23-28 Jan	40	39½	18	2½	+½
30 Jan-4 Feb	37	45	16	2	-8
6-11 Feb	37½	42	18	2½	-4½
13-18 Feb	40	43	15	2	-3

3. Government Record

The electorate's approval of the record of the Government has improved slightly from the nadir reached at the start of February and the approval level is now back to the level reached just before Christmas.

Government Record

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
9-14 Jan	33	53	14
17-22 Jan	32	56	12
23-28 Jan	35	52	13
30 Jan-4 Feb	29	58	13
6-11 Feb	30	55	15
13-18 Feb	31	58	11

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs. Thatcher's personal popularity has improved somewhat since last week - we found 41% of electors satisfied with Mrs. Thatcher as Prime Minister (up from 37% in the previous week). There was almost no change in the popularity of Callaghan or Steel.

5. Communication

In the week up to February 18th 13% of electors claimed to have heard something making them more favourably inclined towards the Government (11% in the previous week) and 33% something making them less favourably inclined toward the Government (31% in the previous week.)

When we asked our respondents what they had seen or heard in the previous seven days tending to make them more or less favourably inclined towards the Government we found:-

<u>Heard making them more favourably inclined towards the Government.</u>	%	<u>Heard making them less favourably inclined towards the Government.</u>	%
Relations with Unions	7	Handling of Steel Strike	10
The Leader	2	Relations with Unions	7
Handling of Steel Strike	2	Cost of Living	6
Social Security Investigation	2	International Affairs	3
		The Leader	3

(Based on numbers having heard something making them more or less favourably inclined towards the Government).

6. Marplan Poll in Hertford and Stevenage

A Marplan Poll published in the News of the World on Sunday and conducted in Shirley William's old seat of Hertford and Stevenage showed a 9.7% swing to Labour in the constituency since the General Election. Voters in Hertford and Stevenage thought that Shirley Williams should be leader of the Labour Party (55%)

7. Gallup Poll - Daily Telegraph (Public Spending)

A Gallup Poll published in the Daily Telegraph today (25th February) found almost one in two electors taking the view that they prefer increased spending even if it meant increased taxation. Clearly we have a lot of work still to do in getting over the need for public spending cuts.

When asked whether their household had been affected by public spending cuts over 50% of electors said their household had not been affected. Among the 18-34 age group this figure was 49%, 35-44 33%, 45-64 58% and 65+ 72%.