

# Conservative Research Department

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CONFIDENTIAL

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*Dear Derek,*

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 82

As part of the Party's opinion research programme, we purchase from Gallup an analysis of their weekly surveys which includes details of voting intention, attitudes to the Government and attitudes to the Leaders of the three main political parties. The attached note summarises the findings from the latest of these surveys conducted from September 9th to September 14th. It also includes a review of opinion polls published over the last week.

*D. K. Britto*

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## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 82

(produced 18th September 1981)

1. Introduction

As part of the Party's opinion research programme, we purchase from Gallup an analysis of their weekly surveys which includes details of voting intention, attitudes to the Government and attitudes to the Leaders of the three main political parties. These surveys provide an insight into both overall movements of support in the electorate and movements among the main socio-demographic groups. We do not purchase this survey from Gallup on an exclusive basis and, as a result, the regular (monthly) poll published in the Daily Telegraph provides figures of voting intention, etc. which are the same as our 'tracking' figures for one week in each month. The findings from the latest tracking study conducted between September 9th and 14th are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday September 17th. This survey found a Labour lead of 4½% over the Conservatives compared with 10½% in the previous published survey conducted between 12th and 17th August. Comparison with the unpublished Gallup 'tracking' study conducted in the period 1st to 7th September shows a very sharp drop in Labour's lead from 16% (1/7 September) to 4½% in the latest study. This change, as a result of a single survey, should be treated with a degree of caution as unfortunately opinion polls are not precise measuring devices, and this latest survey marks a sharp change from the trend found in previous surveys which may or may not be confirmed by future surveys.

The latest survey, conducted largely before the start of the Liberal Party Conference, actually found a fall in the level of support for the Liberals but a slight increase in the level of unprompted support for the Social Democrats. Details of the trend in support for the main parties since April this year are shown in the table below. The figures in this table are on the same basis as the figures for voting intention included in the Daily Telegraph - they exclude don't knows.

	VOTING INTENTION (excluding don't knows)					
	CON	LAB	LIB	SOCIAL DEMOCRAT	OTHER	LEAD
1979	%	%	%	%	%	%
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
1981						
31 March/ 6 April	29.0	32.0	17.0	19.0	3.0	-3.0
8/13 April	30.0	34.5	14.0	19.0	2.5	-4.5**
15/21 April	28.5	37.5	17.5	15.0	1.5	-9.0
22/27 April	30.5	36.5	15.0	15.5	2.5	-6.0
29 April /5 May	33.0	35.0	17.0	13.5	1.5	-2.0
6/11 May	32.0	35.5	18.0	11.0	3.5	-3.5**
13/18 May	33.5	36.0	17.0	10.5	3.0	-2.5
19/26 May	31.0	38.0	15.5	12.0	3.5	-7.0
26 May/1 June	30.0	36.0	18.0	13.0	3.0	-6.0
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 **

\* First Gallup post-Election survey

In addition to the standard voting intention question which does not include specific reference to any of the political parties, each Gallup tracking study includes two additional questions on how respondents claim they would vote if they could vote (a) for a Social Democratic candidate or (b) for a Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance candidate. Details of the trend of answers in response to these standard questions are shown below. It must be noted that unlike the analysis presented in the Daily Telegraph these particular tables have not been re-calculated excluding don't knows.

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE  
(including don't knows)

	<u>31 Mar</u> 6 Apr	<u>8/13</u> Apr	<u>15/21</u> Apr	<u>22/27</u> Apr	<u>29 Apr</u> 5 May	<u>6/11</u> May	<u>13/18</u> May	<u>19/26</u> May	<u>26 May</u> 1 June	<u>3/8</u> June	<u>9/15</u> June
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	22	23	25	23	25	23	21	22	23
Labour	21	24	25	24	25	24	27	26	27	27	28
Liberal	10	10	11	9	10	11	11	10	12	9	12
Others	2	1	1	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	1
Social Democrat Party	26	27	22	24	21	21	20	21	20	23	20
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	20	17	19	18	15	18	15	18	17	17	16

	<u>16/22</u> June	<u>24/30</u> June	<u>1/6</u> July	<u>8/13</u> July	<u>15/20</u> July	<u>22/27</u> July	<u>29 July</u> 3 Aug	<u>5/10</u> Aug	<u>12/17</u> Aug	<u>19/24</u> Aug	<u>26/31</u> Aug	<u>1/79/14</u> Sept	<u>14</u> Sept
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	23	21	22	21	21	18	20	20	20	21	20	19	23
Labour	28	31	29	29	28	28	30	27	27	25	28	29	27
Liberal	11	11	8	9	11	9	7	8	8	11	9	10	7
Others	2	1½	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	19	19	20	20	23	29	26	25	26	25	24	25	24
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/ it depends	16	16½	16	18	16	16	15	18	18	16	18	15	18

## VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC/LIBERAL ALLIANCE

	31 Mar 6 Apr	8/13 Apr	15/21 Apr	22/27 Apr	29 Apr 5 May	6/11 May	13/18 May	19/26 May	26 May 1 June	3/8 June	9/15 June		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Conservative	20	21	21	22	21	22	24	23	20	21	22		
Labour	20	23	24	24	24	22	25	25	25	27	17		
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Others	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1		
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	35	37	34	33	32	32	32	31	33	32	30		
Don't know/it depends	23	17	20	18	20	22	16	19	19	18	19		

  

	16/22 June	24/30 June	1/6 July	8/13 July	15/20 July	22/27 July	29 July 3 Aug	5/10 Aug	12/17 Aug	19/24 Aug	26/31 Aug	1/7 Sept	9/14 Sept
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	24	20	22	20	21	18	20	20	19	21	19	20	23
Labour	27	29	28	27	27	27	29	25	27	25	27	28	26
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	28	32	28	31	33	37	33	33	33	35	31	33	32
Don't know/it depends	19	18	19	19	18	16	16	19	19	18	22	18	18

On an unprompted basis (without recalculation to exclude don't knows) the standard voting intention question found 16% of the electorate claiming they would vote Social Democratic and 10% Liberal (29% Conservative, 33% Labour) in the week 9/14 September. When Gallup specifically asked respondents how they would vote if a Social Democratic candidate stood in their constituency they found 24% of electors (almost one in four) claiming they would vote for such a candidate, 7% claimed they would vote Liberal, 23% Conservative and 27% Labour. Recent weeks have not seen any significant change in the level of Liberal or Social Democratic support found by this question. Gallup also asked respondents how they would vote if they could vote for a candidate standing for a Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance. In the latest study they found 32% of electors (almost one in three) claiming they would vote for candidate standing for the alliance, 23% Conservative and 26% Labour. The level of support for the alliance shown by this question has not changed to any significant extent in recent weeks. The table below shows the level of support found in the three voting intention question in our latest study.

## VOTING INTENTION 9/14 September 1981

	Standard Voting Intention %	Voting if Social Democratic Candidate %	Voting if Social Demo- cratic Liberal candidate %
Conservative	29	23	23
Labour	33	27	26
Liberal	10	7	-
Social Democrat	16	24	-
Social Democrat/Liberal	-	-	32
Others	2	1	1
Don't know	8%	18	18

## 2. Government Record

Slight improvement in level of approval of the record of the Government - back to the level we found in mid-August. Details are shown in the table below:-

	<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>1981</u>			
31 March/ 6 April	26	65	9
8/13 April	24	67	9
15/21 April	25	65	10
22/27 April	27	63	10
29 April/ 5 May	26	62	12
6/11 May	29	60	11
13/18 May	30	57	13
19/26 May	28	60	12
26 May/ 1 June	27	61	12
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

## 4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Sharp improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity in the latest tracking study - almost back to the level we found in mid-August. The survey found almost no change in the popularity of Mr Foot and a sharp drop in the popularity of Mr Steel. Details are shown on the following page.

## POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1981</u>									
31 March/ 6 April	31	63	6	24	55	22	64	17	19
6/13 April	30 <sup>20</sup>	65	5	21	54	24	60	20	20
15/21 April	31	64	6	24	54	22	62	17	21
22/27 April	34	60	6	21	58	20	66	17	18
29 April/ 5 May	34	59	7	20	58	22	60	19	21
6/11 May	35	60	5	26	52	23	63	17	21
13/18 May	36	58	6	27	52	22	63	17	21
19/26 May	35	59	6	27	50	23	60	17	23
26 May / 1 June	32	62	6	27	54	19	62	17	20
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

4. Published Polls(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 17th September 1981)

In addition to the standard tracking question considered above, the Gallup poll in the Daily Telegraph also included reference to a number of other questions. Details of the main findings from these questions are shown below:-

Q. What would you say is the most urgent problem facing the country at the present time?

	<u>All</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Con</u> <u>Voters</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Lab</u> <u>Voters</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Lib</u> <u>Voters</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Social Democrat</u> <u>Voters</u> <u>%</u>
Unemployment	87	81	91	86	91
Cost of living	34	32	36	31	35
Other Economic issues	10	12	8	8	6
Law and Order	8	13	5	11	6
Defence/ Nuclear Weapons	6	5	6	2	9
Increase Productivity	5	7	2	4	6
Housing/Rates/Mortgages	5	4	6	8	4

As far as the electorate is concerned, unemployment remains the most important issue facing this country.

Q. Who would make the best Prime Minister - Mrs Thatcher, Mr Foot or Mr Steel?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Social Democrat</u>
	Voters	Voters	Voters	Voters	Voters
	%	%	%	%	%
Mrs Thatcher	31	81	6	6	23
Mr Foot	26	3	63	9	10
Mr Steel	29	11	19	72	50
Don't know	14	6	12	12	18

Q. Taking everything into account, which party has (a) the best policies (b) the best leaders?

	<u>Sept</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Jan</u>
	1981	1981	1981	1981
	%	%	%	%
<u>Best Policies</u>				
Conservative	30	23	29	31
Labour	30	28	29	32
Liberal	10	11	14	11
Others	8	6	2	2
Don't know	22	32	26	23
<u>Best Leaders</u>				
Conservative	32	28	33	34
Labour	25	22	25	27
Liberal	14	14	16	11
Others	7	6	1	1
Don't know	22	30	25	27

Despite the fact we are behind Labour in terms of voting intention, we are thought to have the best leaders and are seen as equal with Labour on policies.

(b) O.R.C. (Thames TV 15th September 1981)

O.R.C. conducted in the area of the G.L.C. a survey on attitudes to the Greater London Council, and rates. The research was conducted on 11/12 September and Thames TV used the results on 15th September. Details of the main findings are shown below:-

G.L.C. SURVEY - RESULTS

Q.1 Who is the most important politician in deciding how London develops in the future?

	<u>All</u>	<u>Inner</u>	<u>Outer</u>
		London	London
	%	%	%
Horace Cutler	3	2	4
Michael Foot	3	3	3
Michael Heseltine	4	3	5
Ken Livingstone	15	17	14
Margaret Thatcher	11	13	10
Others	10	11	8
Don't know	54	51	56

/..

Q.2 Can you tell me the name of the Leader of the Greater London Council?

	<u>All</u>	<u>Inner</u>	<u>Outer</u>
	%	London	London
	%	%	%
Ken Livingstone	53	58	49
Horace Cutler	4	3	4
Others	2	1	2
Don't know	42	38	44

Q.3 Do you get the impressions that at the moment, the Greater London Council is doing a good job or bad job?

Good Job	20	25	17
Bad Job	45	43	47
Neither good nor bad	19	18	19
Don't know	16	14	17

Q.4 In fact Ken Livingstone is the Leader of the Greater London Council. Do you get the impression that he is doing a good job or a bad job?

Good Job	20	26	17
Bad Job	47	45	49
Neither	12	12	13
Don't know	20	18	22

Q.5 On the whole, would you prefer a system which meant

Lower London Transport fares paid for out of higher rates	24	26	22
or			
Fares increasing from time to time with no increase in rates	64	60	67
Don't know	12	14	11

Q.6 If rates need to be increased to pay for London Transport fares cuts, do you think

(a) there should be a referendum about this in which everyone in London could vote	76	74	77
or			
(b) the Council should just go ahead and implement it	18	22	16
(c) Don't know	6	4	7

Q.7 How would you be inclined to vote if there were to be a General Election tomorrow?

Conservative	24	21	26
Labour	34	38	32
Liberal	7	6	7
Social Democrat	17	18	16
Others	3	3	4
Don't know	15	15	15



The survey found just over half the electorate in London could name Ken Livingstone as the Leader of the G.L.C. and 47% thought he was doing a bad job. When asked whether they would prefer lower London Transport fares paid for out of higher rates, or fares increasing from time to time with no increase in rates, O.R.C. found 24% wanting lower fares and 64% fares increasing from time to time. On the question of a referendum before rates are increased to pay for London Transport fare cuts - 76% wanted a referendum and 18% did not (6% did not have a view)

(c) System Three (Glasgow Herald 15th September 1981)

A System Three poll conducted in Scotland only from August 22nd to September 2nd was published in the Glasgow Herald on 15th September 1981. Details of the main findings are shown below:

Q. If there were a General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

	<u>August</u> 1981 %	<u>July</u> 1981 %	<u>General Election</u> %
Conservative	17	18	31
Labour	51	51	42
S.N.P.	19	18	17
Liberal	9	9	9
Others	4	4	-

Q. As you probably know, a new Social Democratic Party has been formed. If you had these parties to choose from, which one would you vote for?

	<u>August</u> 1981 %	<u>July</u> 1981 %
Conservative	14	13
Labour	43	47
S.N.P.	18	17
Liberal	6	8
Social Democrat	18	15