

Wife Box.

CONFIDENTIAL

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 47

(produced 22nd December 1980)

1. Introduction

The results from our latest tracking study are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on 19th December 1980. This survey conducted between December 10th and 15th found a 12½% Labour lead compared with the 10½% in the November published Gallup poll. These published Gallup findings which are in line with the trend we have seen in recent weeks in our unpublished 'tracking' surveys are in sharp contrast with the 24% Labour lead M.O.R.I. found in a poll published in the Sunday Times on 21st December 1980 and conducted 18th/19th December. It is difficult to believe that public opinion is so volatile that such a large movement of support has taken place in the few days between the fieldwork of the Gallup and M.O.R.I. polls.

The trend in Labour lead (that can be seen in the table below) in our private Gallup tracking studies has moved sharply against us from early November, but appears to have stabilised at about a 12% Labour lead. Support for the Conservative Party has remained constant since mid November 1980.

2. Voting Intention

	<u>Voting Intention</u>				
	<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>					
27 Aug/1 Sept	37.0	49.0	11.5	2.5	-12.0
2/8 Sept	36.5	48.5	12.5	2.5	-12.0
10/15 Sept	35.5	45.0	16.5	3.0	-9.5**
17/22 Sept	35.0	47.0	14.0	4.0	-12.0
25/29 Sept	35.5	47.0	15.0	2.5	-11.5
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**

* First Gallup post-election survey
** Published Polls

The 12½% Labour lead we found in our latest study compares with a Labour lead of 6% in December 1971, 7½% in January 1972 and 8½% in February 1971. It should of course be remembered that support for the Liberals at this point in the 1970-74 Conservative Government

2. Voting Intention (continued)

was roughly half what it currently is - 7½% in December 1971 compared with 14½% in the latest Gallup survey.

3. Government Record

Our latest Gallup survey found 29% of the electorate approving of the record of the Government to date - this is back to the level we found in early November. This figure can be compared with the 34% of the electorate who approved of the 1970-74 Conservative Government's record in December 1971.

For full details please see table below and attached graph.

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1980</u>			
27 Aug/1st Sept	31	56	13
2/8 Sept	31	58	11
10/15 Sept	29	57	13
17/22 Sept	30	59	12
25/29 Sept	27	60	13
1/6 Oct	30	57	13
8/14 Oct	32	55	13
15/20 Oct	34	54	12
22/27 Oct	29	60	11
20 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/1st Dec	27	62	11
3/8 Dec	26	64	11
10/15 Dec	29	59	12

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Our latest survey found a slight further improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity with 35% of the electorate satisfied with her as Prime Minister, in December 1971 39% of the electorate claimed to be satisfied with Mr Heath as Prime Minister. Mr Foot remains unpopular with only 30% of the electorate thinking he will be a good leader of the Labour Party - in May 1976 one month after he became Labour leader, and at a point when we lead the polls, 43% of the electorate thought Mr Callaghan would be a good leader of the Labour Party.

4. Popularity of Political Leaders (continued)

For full details please see table below and attached graph.

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>									
27 Aug/1 Sept	38	56	6	-	-	-	50	21	29
2/8 Sept	35	59	6	-	-	-	57	18	25
10/15 Sept	37	58	5	-	-	-	59	19	22
17/22 Sept	35	59	5	-	-	-	59	17	25
25/29 Sept	33	60	6	-	-	-	60	18	22
1/6 Oct	38	56	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/1st 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

5. Published Pollsa. Issues

The M.O.R.I. poll in the Sunday Times (21st December 1980) found as we have known since early Summer that the electorate now regards unemployment as the main problem facing the country rather than inflation. What is of more concern is the Government's rating in terms of approval or disapproval of handling some of the main problems we face as a country. In October 1979 we had a lead with regard to reputation for handling six out of the fourteen issues included in Gallup's standard list (law and order, defence, immigration, old age pensions, housing and taxation). In Gallup's latest study conducted between December 10th and December 15th we had a lead with regard to handling only one of the fourteen issues - law and order.

Details are given on the following page.

5a Issues (continued)

In general, do you approve or disapprove
of the way the Government is handling ...

(a '+' sign indicates excess of approvers
over disapprovers and a '-' sign the
opposite)

	<u>December</u> 1980	<u>September</u> 1980	<u>October</u> 1979
Law and order	+17	+9	+33
Defence	-2	+14	+11
Immigration	-3	-13	+8
Old Age Pensioners	-4	-26	+25
Common Market	-10	-14	-11
Roads	-17	-22	-10
Strikes and Labour Relations	-19	-25	-14
Education	-25	-39	-36
Housing	-27	-18	+8
Taxation	-29	-19	+6
Economic & Foreign Affairs	-30	-27	-13
Health Service	-33	-36	-30
Cost of living	-45	-56	-46
Full employment	-62	-62	-14

b) The Liberals and Centre Party

National polls over recent months have shown no signs of a major upsurge in support for the Liberals - however they have continued to make gains of seats from us in local government by-elections. Liberal support has remained at around the 15% mark since early November - compared to around 7% at an equivalent period in the 1970-74 Conservative Government.

The theoretical appeal of a Centre Party grouping to the electorate was shown by the Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on 19th December which found that after the term Centre Party had been explained to them 37% of the electorate said they would definitely or probably vote for a Centre Party candidate. The actual level of support for a Centre Party would probably in reality be much lower than this but the Gallup poll does show that a Centre Party, would, if well lead have fertile ground in which to grow. Gallup found 26% of Conservative supporters, 34% of Labour supporters and 61% of Liberal supporters saying they definitely or probably would vote for a Centre Party. In terms of potential leaders Gallup found David Steel and Shirley Williams as being the most popular with Edward Heath and Roy Jenkins having significantly less appeal as Centre Party leaders.

c) Northern Ireland

The M.O.R.I. poll published in the Sunday Times on 21st December 1980 also looked at attitudes towards the idea of holding a referendum in Great Britain on Northern Ireland. They asked the question 'If there were a referendum tomorrow in England, Scotland and Wales on whether or not Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom, which way would you vote'. 29% said they would vote for Northern Ireland

5c Northern Ireland (continued)

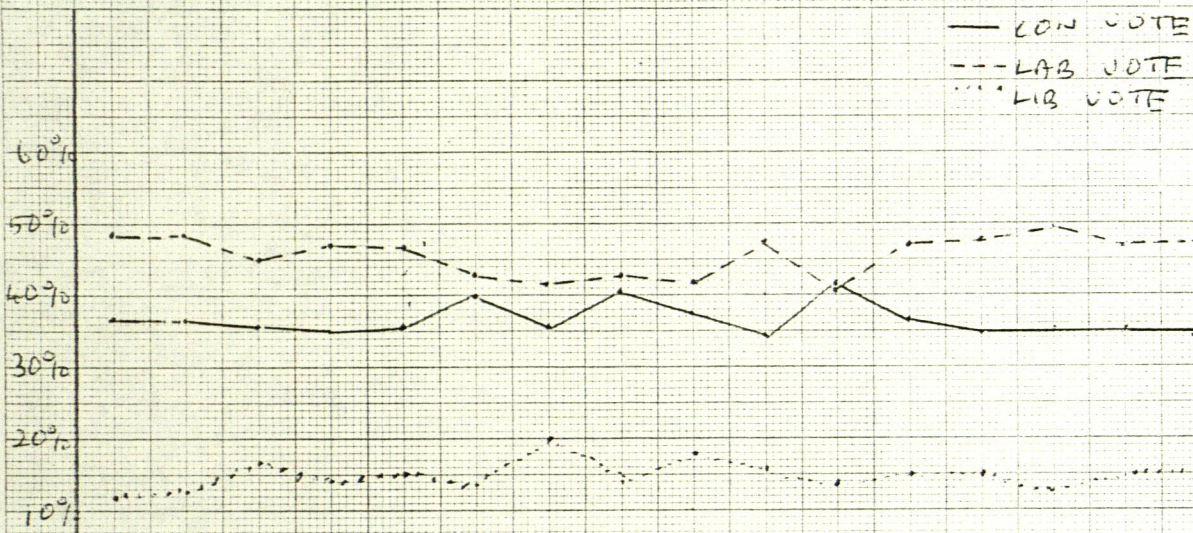
to remain part of the UK, 50% not remain part, 13% would not vote and 8% are undecided.

5d Attitudes to National Service

A Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on 29th December 1980 and conducted between December 3rd and 9th looked at public attitudes to national service.

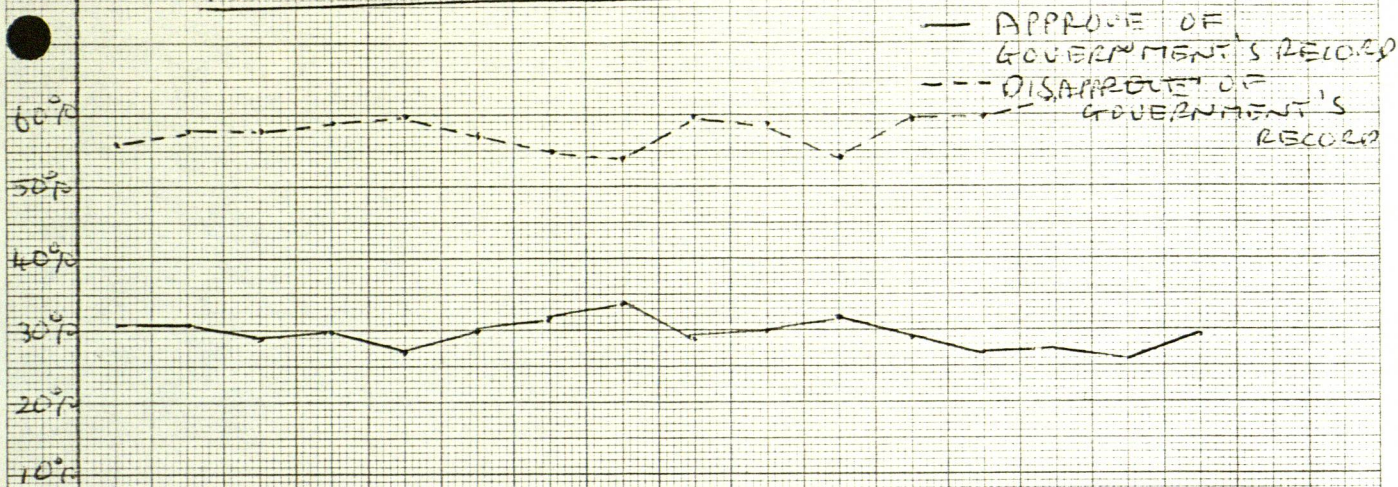
They found that two in three (68%) of those interviewed (16+) thought it would be a good idea if compulsory military service for young men were to be adopted in this country - 23% thought it would be a bad idea. The suggestion was less well received by young people with a little over half (52%) of the under-21 age group thinking the idea of compulsory military service a good idea - 36% thought it would be a bad idea.

VOTING INTENTION



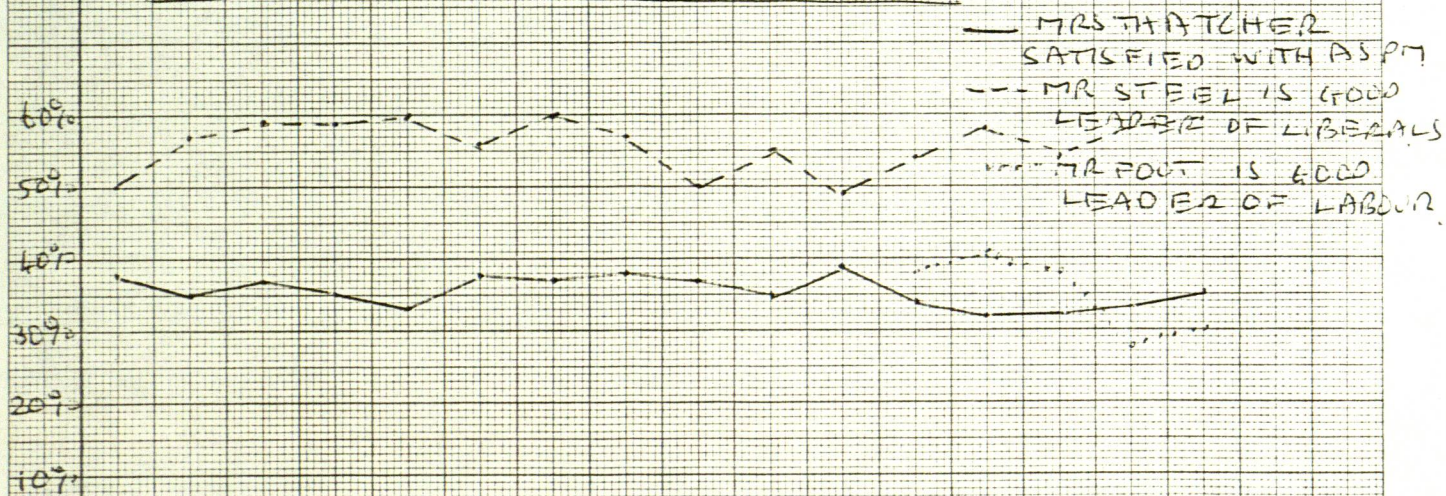
27/04/74 21/8/74 10/1/75 17/2/75 25/3/75 9/4/75 8/11/75 15/12/75 22/1/76 27/2/76 24/3/76 5/10/76 12/1/77 19/2/77 26/3/77 31/8/77 10/1/78

GOVERNMENT RECORD



27/04/74 21/8/74 10/1/75 17/2/75 25/3/75 9/4/75 8/11/75 15/12/75 22/1/76 27/2/76 24/3/76 5/10/76 12/1/77 19/2/77 26/3/77 31/8/77 10/1/78

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS



27/04/74 21/8/74 10/1/75 17/2/75 25/3/75 9/4/75 8/11/75 15/12/75 22/1/76 27/2/76 24/3/76 5/10/76 12/1/77 19/2/77 26/3/77 31/8/77 10/1/78