

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 115
(produced 31st May 1982)

1. Introduction

Gallup conducted the interviewing for our latest 'tracking' study from 19th to 24th May - before the recent British successes at Darwin and Goose Green. The survey found 45% of electors claiming they would vote Conservative, 27% Labour, 15% Social Democrat, 11% Liberal and 2% for 'other' parties. This is the highest level of support for the Conservative Party found in any Gallup survey since before the 1979 General Election. We have to go back to winter 1979 to find a higher level of support for the Conservative Party - in February 1979 53% of the electorate claimed they would vote for us. Labour support has fallen to 27% in Gallup polls on a number of occasions since May 1979 and fell to 21% in early December 1981. Liberal support in our latest 'tracking' study remains almost unchanged - 11% claiming they will vote Liberal, compared with 10% in the previous week (12/17 May). Social Democrat support continues to fall with only 15% claiming they will vote for them - this compares with 25% in early January and 38% in early December. The downward trend in Social Democrat support shown in our last six tracking studies at present shows no signs of an upturn. The combined level of Liberal and Social Democrat support now stands at 26% compared with 51% before Christmas 1981. Details of the trend in our voting intention 'tracking' question are shown in the table below:-

VOTING INTENTION
(unprompted question, excluding don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL AND SOCIAL</u>
	%	%	%	<u>DEMOCRAT</u>	%	%	<u>DEMOCRAT</u>
				%			%
<u>1979</u>							
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	+7.0	13.8
13/16 June*	42.0	43.5	13.0	-	5.0	-9.0	13.0
<u>1982</u>							
5/11 Jan	25.5	30.0	17.0	25.0	2.5	-4.5	42.0
13/18 Jan	27.5	29.5	13.0	26.5	3.5	-2.5**	39.5
20/25 Jan	30.0	27.0	14.0	26.5	2.5	+3.0	40.5
27 Jan/1 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	24.0	3.0	0.0	39.0
3/8 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	26.0	1.0	0.0	41.0
10/15 Feb	27.5	34.0	14.5	21.5	2.5	-6.5**	35.0
17/22 Feb	26.5	33.5	14.0	22.0	4.0	-7.0	36.0
24 Feb/1 March	31.0	32.5	11.0	22.5	3.0	-1.5	33.5
3/8 March	30.0	33.5	11.5	21.0+	4.0	-3.5	32.5
11/15 March	31.5	33.0	11.5	21.5+	2.5	-1.5**	33.0
17/22 March	34.0	30.0	11.0	21.0+	4.0	+4.0	32.0
24/29 March	32.0	28.0	11.0	27.5+	1.5	+4.0	38.5
31 March/5 April	34.0	27.0	10.0	26.0+	3.0	+7.0	36.0
7/12 April	31.5	29.0	11.0	26.0+	2.5	+2.5**	37.0
13/19 April	31.0	30.0	10.0	26.0+	3.0	+1.0	36.0
21/26 April	31.5	33.0	10.5	24.5+	0.5	-1.5	35.0
28 April/ 3 May	37.0	30.5	11.0	20.0+	1.5	+6.5	31.0
5/10 May	41.5	28.0	9.5	19.5+	1.5	+13.5**	29.0
12/17 May	42.0	31.0	10.0	16.0+	1.0	+11.0	26.0
19/24 May	45.0	27.0	11.0	15.0+	2.0	+18.0	26.0

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

+ Includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance

The Economist on 29th May included the results of a MORI poll conducted on 25/26 May which found 51% claiming they would vote Conservative, 25% Labour and 22% Liberal/SDP Alliance. These figures need to be treated with considerable caution as they are based on a telephone re-interview of a 'panel' study set up by MORI for the Economist and involved only 400 interviews.

2. Government Record

For only the second time since it was elected more people approve of the record of the Government than disapprove - 46% approved and 44% disapproved. This can be compared with the situation in mid-February when 22% approved of our record and 66% disapproved. Details of the trend are shown below:-

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/16 June	34	41	25
<u>1982</u>			
6/11 January	23	65	12
13/18 January	24	65	12
20/25 January	26	62	13
27 Jan/1 Feb	25	62	13
3/8 Feb	26	63	11
10/15 Feb	24	66	10
17/22 Feb	22	66	13
24 Feb/1 March	23	63	13
3/8 March	24	65	11
11/15 March	29	59	12
17/22 March	28	60	13
24/29 March	29	58	13
31 March/ 5 April	31	57	12
7/12 April	32	56	12
13/19 April	34	54	12
21/26 April	34	55	11
28 April/ 3 May	40	47	13
5/10 May	42	46	12
12/17 May	43	42	15
19/24 May	46	44	10

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Our latest study found 47% of the electorate claiming to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 48% dissatisfied and 5% without a view. The survey found no sign of a major upsurge in Mr Foot's popularity - only 18% thought he is a good leader of the opposition and 72% he is not a good leader. The survey found almost no change in Mr Steel's popularity. Details of the trend are shown below:-

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</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
<u>1982</u>									
6/11 January	30	65	5	20	65	14	62	20	18
13/18 January	32	65	4	18	67	16	59	22	19
20/25 January	32	64	4	17	68	15	59	22	19
27 Jan/1 Feb	33	62	5	19	64	17	60	18	22
3/8 Feb	31	65	4	20	63	17	61	20	19
10/15 Feb	29	66	5	19	66	15	59	23	17
17/22 Feb	29	65	5	20	64	16	58	20	21
24 Feb/ 1st March	32	63	5	21	64	15	55	23	22
3/8 March	30	66	4	20	64	16	58	24	18
11/15 March	34	62	4	21	65	14	58	22	10
17/22 March	33	62	5	22	64	14	59	21	20
24/29 March	35	59	6	19	65	15	61	20	19
31 March/ 5 April	37	58	5	20	65	15	60	22	18
7/12 April	35	60	5	23	61	16	63	18	19
13/19 April	36	60	5	28	59	14	63	18	19
21/26 April	37	59	4	26	60	14	66	17	17
28 April/ 3 May	41	53	6	24	65	12	62	20	18
5/10 May	44	51	6	18	71	11	64	20	17
12/17 May	48	47	5	17	71	12	65	18	17
19/24 May	47	48	5	18	72	10	63	18	19

4. Published Pollsa) MORI (Economist 29th May 1982)

The Economist on 29th May included the results of a MORI poll conducted on 25/26 May. The survey was based on a telephone re-interview of a 'panel' study. The results of the survey should be treated with caution as the sample is unlikely to be representative of the electorate.

The survey included a number of questions on reactions to the Government handling of the Falklands Islands crisis. MORI found satisfaction with Mrs Thatcher's handling of the crisis has increased dramatically and now stands at 84% compared with 60% at the time of the sending of the task force.

MORI asked 'Do you think that retaining British sovereignty over the Falklands is important enough to justify the loss of British servicemen's lives'. They found 62% answered 'yes' (44% April 14th) and 34% 'no' (49% April 14th).

When asked 'On balance do you think world opinion of Britain has gone up/gone down/remained unchanged during the Falklands dispute'- 38% thought it had 'gone up', 34% 'unchanged', 19% 'gone down' and 9% did not have a view.

MORI asked 'Do you think in their handling of the situation in the Falklands the Government has been too willing to use military force/about right/not willing enough'. 70% thought the Government had been 'about right', 16% 'too willing', 12% 'not willing enough', and 27% did not have a view.

When asked 'If Britain recaptures the Falklands which of these options do you feel are acceptable as a long-term settlement and which are not acceptable:-

	<u>ACCEPTABLE</u> %
The Falklands should become Argentine sovereign-territory but leased back to the British Government for administration	21
The United Nations should take over trusteeship of the Islands	51
British sovereignty of the Falklands should be retained backed up by British military and naval presence	70