

# Conservative Research Department

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CONFIDENTIAL

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*Derek,*

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 66

The interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted from May 29th until May 26th. The survey found no signs of an upturn in support for the Liberals or Social Democrats. Support for the Conservative Party slipped slightly whilst there was a marginal increase in support for Labour (not statistically significant). The net effect of the changes in support for Conservatives and Labour has been a widening in Labour's lead to 7% compared with 2½% in the previous week (13/18 May).

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## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 66

(produced 29th May 1981)

1. Introduction

The interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted from 19th until 26th May during a period when the Social Democrats received very little press coverage. The survey found no significant changes in the level of support for the main parties - support for the Conservatives fell slightly as did support for the Liberals - support for Labour increased by two percentage points and for the Social Democrats by one percentage point. The effect of these changes (when don't knows are excluded) is to increase Labour's lead to 7% - from 2½% in the week 13/18 May.

The tables below and graphs attached to this note show the trend in support for the main parties from early March for:-

- (a) the standard voting intention question (the term Social Democrat is not mentioned in the question)
- (b) how the electorate said they would vote if a Social Democratic candidate was standing
- (c) how the electorate said they would vote if a candidate for a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance stood.

VOTING INTENTION (including don't knows)

	4/9 Mar	12/16 Mar	18/23 Mar	25/30 Mar	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
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	27	27	23	27	26	27	26	27	29	29	31	28
Labour	32	30	31	27	29	31	34	32	31	32	33	35
Liberal	18	16	15	16	15	13	16	13	15	16	16	14
Others	3	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	3
Social Demo- cratic Party	12	12	17	17	17	17	16	14	12	10	10	11
Don't know/ It depends	8	11	12	12	10	16	9	12	11	9	8	9

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

	4/9 Mar	12/16 Mar	18/23 Mar	25/30 Mar	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
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	22	21	18	21	21	22	22	23	25	23	25	23
Labour	25	22	22	20	21	24	25	24	25	24	27	26
Liberal	12	11	11	10	10	10	11	9	10	11	11	10
Others	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	4	3	2	2
Social Demo- cratic Party	25	25	27	29	26	27	22	24	21	21	20	21
Social Demo- cratic/Liberal alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/ it depends	16	17	20	20	20	17	19	18	15	18	15	18

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC/LIBERAL CANDIDATE

	<u>4/9</u>	<u>12/16</u>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25/30</u>	<u>31 Mar</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/21</u>	<u>22/27</u>	<u>29 Apr</u>	<u>6/11</u>	<u>13/18</u>	<u>19/26</u>
	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	6 Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	5 May	May	May	May
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	22	20	17	20	20	21	21	22	21	22	24	23
Labour	24	21	22	19	20	23	24	24	24	22	25	25
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2
Social Demo- cratic Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Demo- cratic/Liberal alliance	36	37	38	37	35	37	34	33	32	32	32	31
Don't know/ it depends	17	21	22	22	23	17	20	18	20	22	16	19

Support for the Social Democrats would appear to have 'peaked' in the late March early April and over recent weeks has shown a clear downward trend - such trends might be reversed when (and if) the Social Democrats re-start their publicity campaign.

2, Standard Voting Intention

The latest study found a widening of Labour's lead over the Conservatives to 7 %. At approximately an equivalent point in the 1970-1974 Conservative administration Labour (June 1972) had a 6% lead over the Conservatives. However in June 1972 only 10% of the electorate claimed they would vote Liberal - our latest survey (conducted 19/26 May) found 15½% of those who gave a voting intention saying they would vote Liberal and 12% Social Democrat.

VOTING INTENTION

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>
	%	%	%	<u>DEMOCRAT</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>1981</u>						
4/9 March	29.5	34.5	20.0	12.5	3.5	-5.0
12/16 March	30.0	34.0	18.0	14.0	4.0	-4.0
18/23 March	26.0	35.0	17.0	17.0	5.0	-9.0
25/30 March	30.0	30.5	18.0	19.0	2.5	-0.5**
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

\* First Gallup Post-election survey

\*\* Published polls

### 3. Government Record

The latest survey found a slight fall in the level of approval for the Government's record - however the level of approval still remains considerably above that which Gallup found in early March 1981.

#### GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1981</u>			
4/9 March	23	65	12
12/16 March	23	67	9
25/30 March	22	69	9
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

### 4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Almost no change in the popularity of Mrs Thatcher and Mr Foot. Slight fall in Mr Steel's popularity.

#### POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u> %	<u>Dis- sat.</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Is</u> %	<u>Is Not</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Is</u> %	<u>Is Not</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1981</u>									
4/9 March	28	66	6	25	52	23	62	18	20
12/16 March	30	64	6	23	52	26	63	15	22
18/23 March	28	67	5	24	55	24	63	18	19
25/ 30 March	30	66	4	20	55	25	61	19	19
31 March/6 April	31	63	6	24	55	22	64	17	19
8/13 April	30	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

5. Published PollsScotsman (27th May 1981)

An M.O.R.I. poll published in the Scotsman on 27th May 1981 looked at public opinion in Scotland. They found a level of support for a Liberal/Social Democrat alliance that considerably exceeds the total level of support for both parties separately. Details are shown below:-

VOTING INTENTIONS (SCOTLAND)

	<u>May 1979</u> <u>General</u> <u>Election</u> %	<u>Feb 1981</u> %	<u>May 1981</u> %	<u>If Liberal/ SDP Alliance</u> <u>May 1981</u> %
Conservative	31.4	20	23	18
Labour	41.5	44	42	34
Liberal	9.0	14	14	-
SNP	17.3	16	15	17
Social Democrat	-	5	6	-
Liberal/SDP	-	-	-	31
Other Party	0.8	1	-	-

When asked what they thought about the prospects for the future of the Scottish economy, 16% claimed they thought it would improve during the next year (10% took this view in February), 18% it will stay the same over the next year (13% in February), 62% get worse over the next year (74% in February) and 4% did not answer (3% in February).

When asked about changing the system of Government in Scotland - MORI found 25% in favour of 'a completely independent Scottish Assembly separate from England', 50% in favour of 'a Scottish Assembly as part of Britain but with substantial power', 25% in favour of no change from the present system. Details of trends in attitudes in this area are shown below.

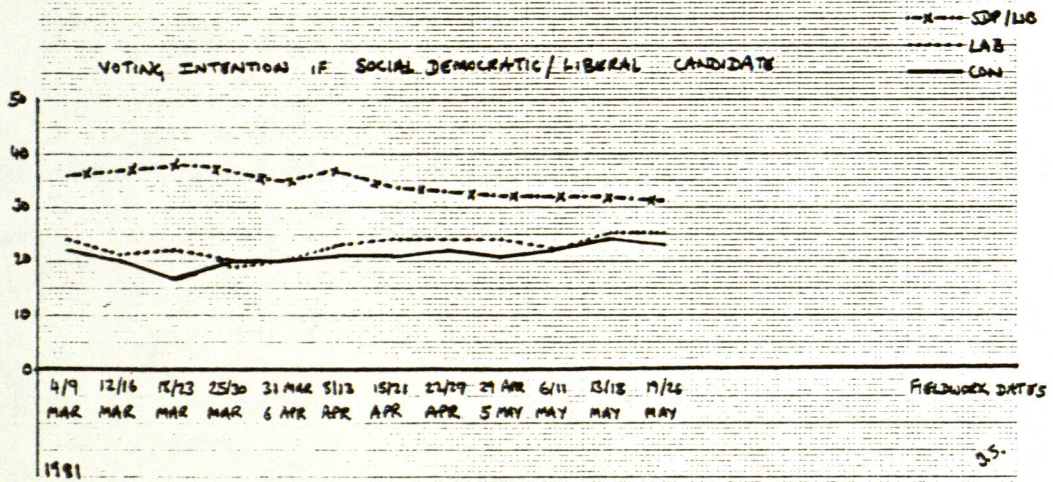
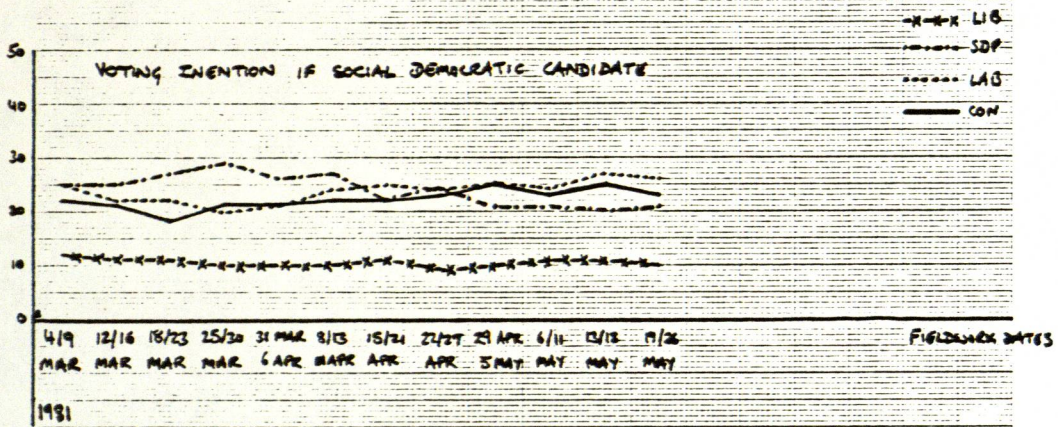
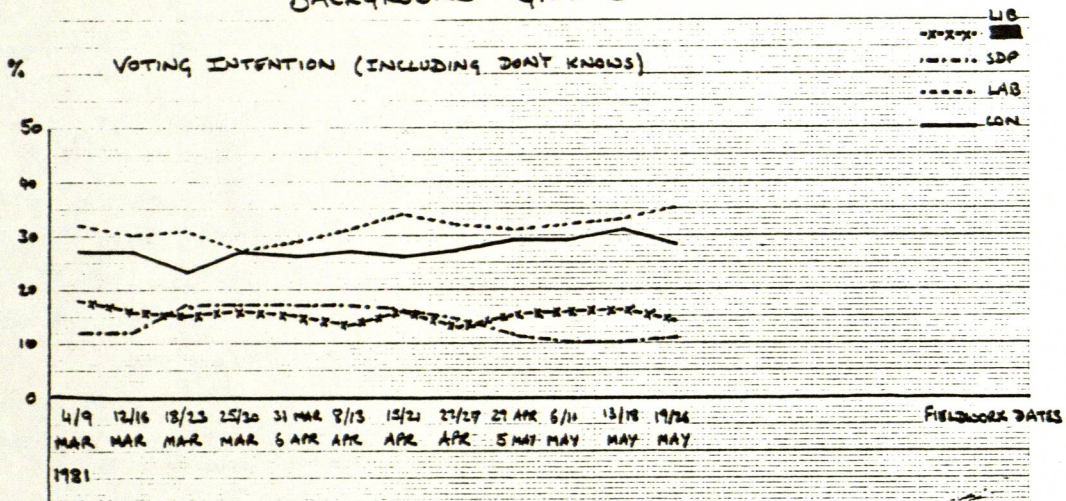
HOME RULE

For running Scotland as a whole would you like to see:

	<u>July</u> <u>1978</u> %	<u>March</u> <u>1979</u> %	<u>November</u> <u>1980</u> %	<u>February</u> <u>1981</u> %	<u>May</u> <u>1981</u> %
A completely independent Scottish Assembly separate from England	15	14	19	25	25
A Scottish Assembly as part of Britain but with substantial powers	48	42	44	45	50
No change from present system	32	35	29	30	35
Don't know	4	9	9	0	*

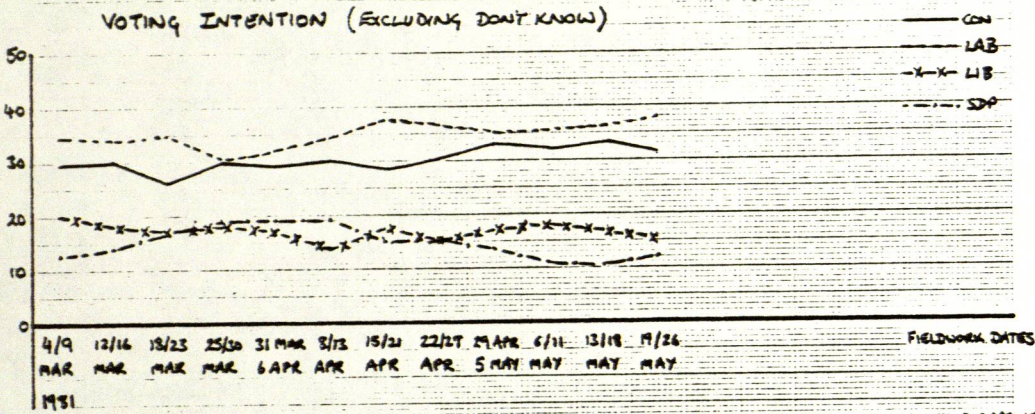
\* less than 1%

# BACKGROUND GRAPHS

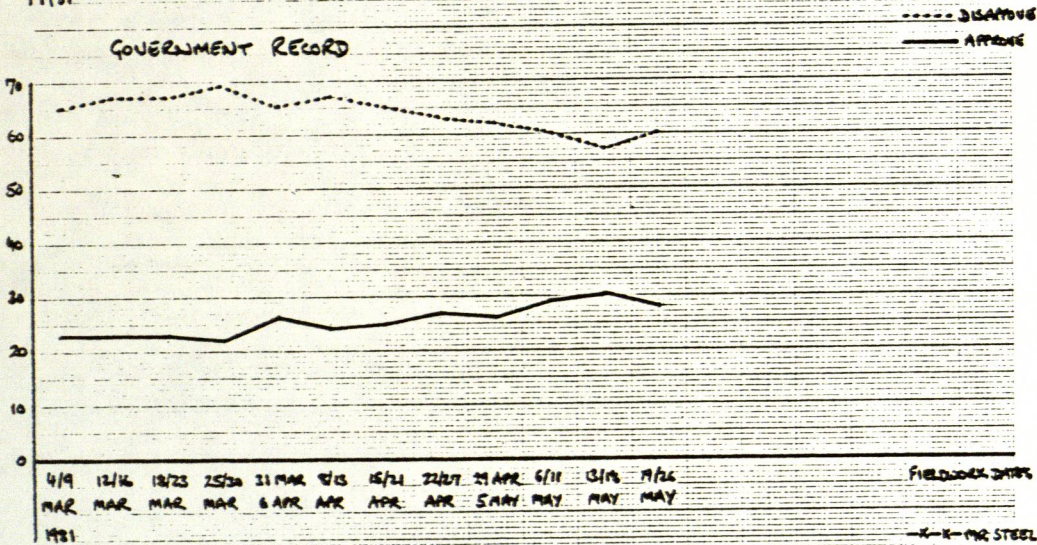


# BACKGROUND GRAPHS

## VOTING INTENTION (EXCLUDING DONT KNOW)



## GOVERNMENT RECORD



## POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

