

# Conservative Research Department

Weekend box

32 Smith Square Westminster SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9511

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KB/sgc

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr Derek Howe  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

CONFIDENTIAL

24th March 1981

*Dear Derek,*

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 57

I attach a note setting out the results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study. The survey that forms the basis of this note was conducted from 12th until 16th March. Gallup found that when prompted one in four of the electorate said that they would vote for a Social Democratic Party, and in a separate question, almost four out of ten that they would vote for a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance.

Section 5 of this note includes some details on a survey looking at public reactions to our Budget.

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PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 57

(produced 22nd March 1981)

1. Introduction

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study conducted from 12th until 16th March are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday March 19th. In terms of the traditional voting intention question Gallup found a 3% Labour lead over the Conservatives but with 16% saying they would vote Liberal and 12% Social Democrat. When Gallup asked 'If an election were to take place tomorrow and a candidate from a new Social Democratic party stood, how would you vote?'. 25% of respondents said they would vote for the new Social Democratic Party, 22% Labour, 21% Conservative and 11% Liberal. When asked 'If a new Social Democratic Party made an alliance with the Liberals, so that a candidate from only one of these parties would stand in each constituency, how would you vote?' they found 37% saying they would vote for the Social Democratic and Liberal alliance, 21% Labour and 20% Conservative. These figures unlike those published in the Daily Telegraph do not exclude don't knows. Full details of the answers given to both these question, and the trend in support as shown for the parties in recent weeks are given below:-

VOTING INTENTION  
(including don't knows)

	<u>Standard Voting Intention</u>						<u>Voting Intention if Social Democratic Candidate</u>					
	<u>3/9</u>	<u>10/16</u>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25 Feb</u>	<u>4/9</u>	<u>12/16</u>	<u>3/9</u>	<u>10/16</u>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25 Feb</u>	<u>4/9</u>	<u>12/16</u>
	Feb	Feb	Feb	2 Mar	Mar	Mar	Feb	Feb	Feb	2 Mar	Mar	Mar
Conservative	31	32	30	28	27	27	21	23	24	22	22	21
Labour	35	31	35	32	32	30	25	23	25	25	25	22
Liberals	18	17	19	19	18	16	11	12	11	13	12	11
Others	7	8	8	9	3	4	2	2	2	1	1	1
Social Democratic Party-*	-	-	-	-	12	12	22	21	22	21	25	25
Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	9	12	9	12	8	11	19	16	17	14	16	17

Voting Intention if Social Democratic/Liberal Candidate

	<u>3/9</u>	<u>10/16</u>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25 Feb</u>	<u>4/9</u>	<u>12/16</u>
	Feb	Feb	Feb	2 Mar	Mar	Mar
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	23	20	22	20
Labour	24	22	23	24	24	21
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	2	1	1	2	2
Social Democratic Party	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democratic/Liberal alliance	33	36	34	35	36	37
Don't know/it depends	19	18	20	20	17	21

N.B. This note normally excludes don't knows (figures are recalculated). It should be noted that this table includes don't knows as a separate category.

\*Social Democratic Party under standard voting intention is based on those respondents claiming they would vote Social Democratic at a General Election. No mention was made of the term in the voting intention question.

When don't knows are excluded (as published in the Telegraph) - Gallup found a 4% Labour lead on the traditional voting intention question with 14% claiming (unprompted) that they would vote Social Democratic. When the idea of a Social Democratic candidate was introduced 31% (excluding don't knows) said they would vote for it and 46% (again excluding don't knows) said they would vote for a Liberal-Social Democratic alliance.

## 2. Voting Intention

Details of the trend in support for the main parties since January 1981 are shown below - support for the Conservatives has fallen from 34% (7/12 Jan) to 30% (12/16 March), support for Labour has fallen from 48% (7/12 Jan) to 34% (12/16 March). Liberal support has increased from 15% (7/12 Jan) to 18% (12/16 March). In addition we have the 14% of those interviewed who claimed (unprompted) that they would vote Social Democrat.

### VOTING INTENTION

(excluding don't knows)

	<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>1981</u>					
7/12 Jan	34.0	48.0	15.0	3.0	-14.0
14/20 Jan	33.0	46.5	18.5	2.0	-13.5**
21/26 Jan	35.5	43.0	17.0	4.5	-7.5**
28 Jan/2 Feb	32.0	40.0	21.5	6.5	-8.0
3/9 Feb	34.0	39.0	20.0	7.0	-5.0
10/16 Feb	36.0	35.5	20.0	8.5	+0.5**
18/23 Feb	32.5	38.5	21.0	8.0	-6.0
25 Feb/ 2 March	31.5	36.0	21.5	11.0	-4.5
4/9 March	29.5	34.5	20.0	16.0+	-5.0
12/16 March	30.0	34.0	18.0	18.0++	-4.0

\* First Gallup post-election survey

\*\* Published polls

+ includes 12½% who said they would vote Social Democrat

++ includes 14% who said they would vote Social Democrat

When the idea of a new Social Democratic party was presented to electors 75% of those who had previously claimed they would vote Conservative maintained this support, 1% moved to Labour, 10% to the Social Democrats 1% to the Liberals and 13% did not know how they would vote. Among previous Labour voters 71% claimed they would still vote Labour, 14% Social Democrat, 3% Liberal and 12% did not know how they would vote. Among Liberal voters 58% claimed they would continue to vote Liberal

24% said they ould vote Social Democrat, 3% Labour, 2% Conservative and 14% did not know how they would vote.

When the idea of a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance was put to electors 72% of previous Conservative supporters remained loyal, 13% said they would vote Social Democratic/Liberal, 1% Labour and 14% did not know how they would vote or that it depended on the circumstances. Among Labour voters 67% remained loyal to Labour, 18% said they would support a Social Democratic/Liberal candidate and 14% said they did not know how they would vote or that it depends on the circumstances. 81% of previous Liberal supporters said they would vote for such an alliance - 1% said they would vote Conservative, 2% Labour and 16% did not know how they would vote or that it depended on the circumstances.

### 3. Government Record

The survey found almost no change in the popularity of the Government with 23% approving of our record to date, 67% disapproving and 10% not answering the question.

#### 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>			
7/12 Jan	27	61	12
14/20 Jan	26	63	11
21/26 Jan	28	58	14
28 Jan /2 Feb	26	62	12
3/9 Feb	27	60	13
10/16 Feb	29	60	11
18/23 Feb	29	59	12
25 Feb/ 2 March	26	62	12
4/9 March	23	65	12
12/16 March	23	67	10

### 4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Almost no change in the popularity of the leaders of the three main parties - Mr Foot remains extremely unpopular and Mr Steel's popularity seems to show signs of further improvement. Mrs Thatcher's popularity improved slightly - improvement however not significant in opinion poll terms.

4. 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>									
7/12 Jan	33	61	6	24	39	36	56	21	23
14/20 Jan	31	63	5	26	42	32	63	19	18
21/26 Jan	34	61	5	23	43	34	57	19	21
28 Jan /2 Feb	32	63	6	21	46	33	62	17	21
3/9 Feb	35	60	6	24	49	27	60	19	21
10/16 Feb	34	60	6	22	49	30	64	16	20
18/23 Feb	33	62	5	20	52	28	58	18	24
25 Feb/2 March	32	62	6	23	50	27	57	22	20
4/9 March	28	66	6	25	52	23	62	18	20
12/16 March	30	64	6	23	52	26	63	15	22

5. Published Polls(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 19th March 1981)

The Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on 19th March 1981 (conducted 12/16 March) looked at public reactions to the 1981 Budget and concluded that it was the most unpopular budget for 30 years. Only 24% of the electorate thought Sir Geoffrey was doing a good job as Chancellor - a figure well below the previous all-time low achieved by Selwyn Lloyd in 1961. 61% of the electorate thought Sir Geoffrey was doing a bad job - a ratio much worse than the electorate's view of Denis Healey's 1977 Budget.

Only 22% thought the Budget was fair - 73% thought it was unfair. The previous low was Selwyn Lloyd's 1961 Budget when only 33% of the electorate thought it was fair.

Details of the public's reactions to some of the measures in the Budget are shown on the following page.

REACTIONS TO 1981 BUDGET MEASURES

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%
Help for the disabled and charities	93	5	2
Increases in pension	90	8	2
Reducing interest rates (the MLR)	81	10	9
Increases in child benefits	68	25	7
New saving schemes	66	13	21
Increases in social security benefits	62	30	8
Special tax on bank profits	59	19	22
Increases in the price of cigarettes, cigars and tobaccos	54	41	9
No increase in personal tax allowance	29	61	10
Road tax to be raised from £60 to £70 p.a.	24	70	6
Increases in price of petrol	10	87	3

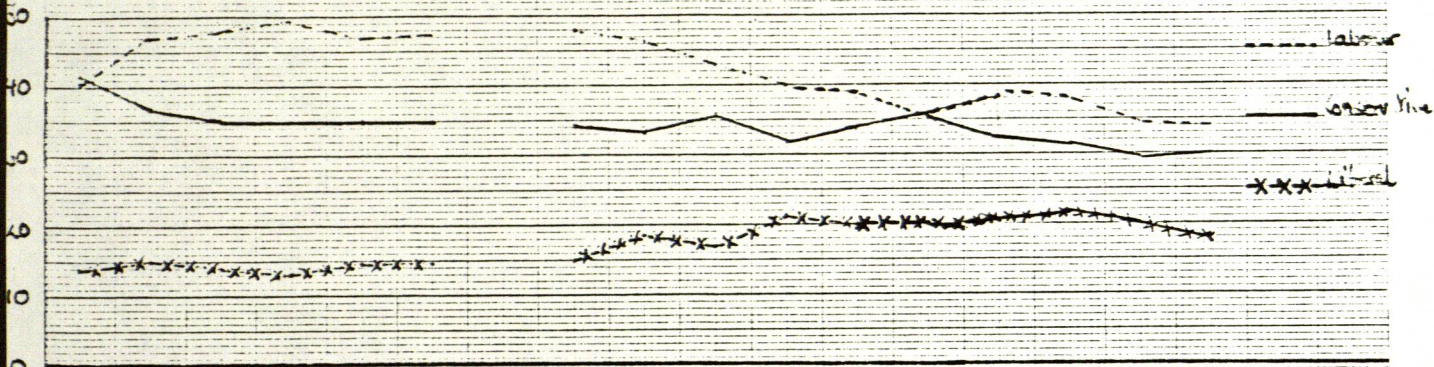
(b) N.O.P (Observer 22nd March 1981)

An N.O.P. poll published in the Observer on 22nd March 1981 and conducted on 19/20 March found 46% of electors claiming they would vote for a candidate standing for a Liberal-Social Democratic alliance when the idea was put to them - 27% said they would vote Labour and 25% Conservative.

If the Social Democrats stood on their own - 35% of the electorate claimed they would vote for them, 29% Labour, 27% Conservative and 7% Liberals.

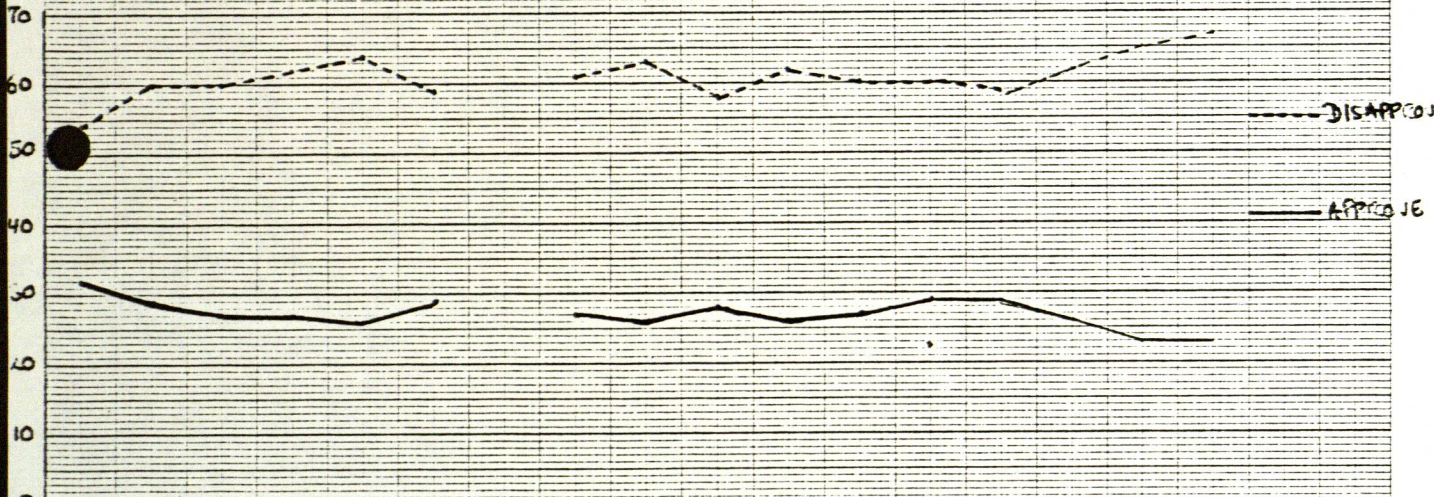
1 AUGUST 1981

VOTING INTENTION



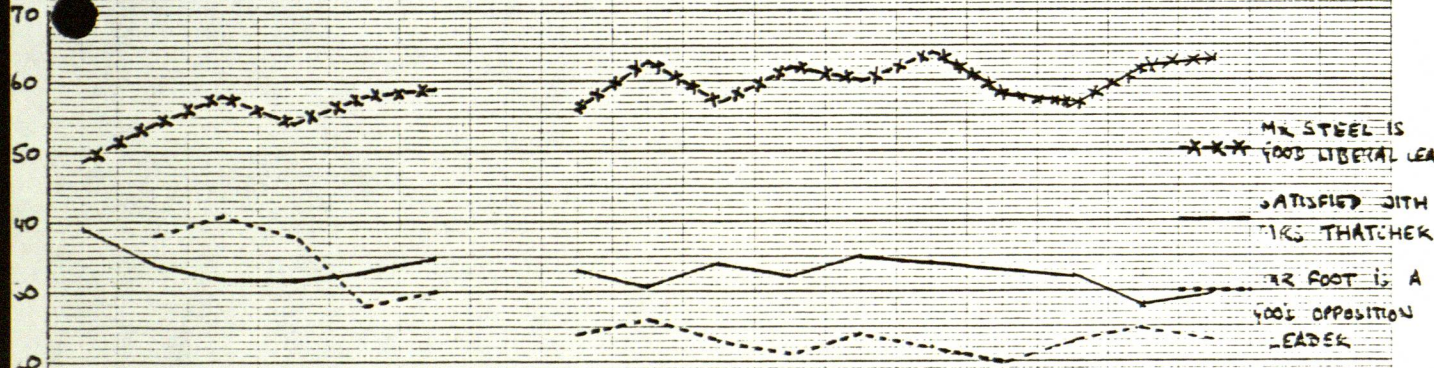
5/10 12/17 19/24 26 NOV 3/8 10/15 7/12 14/20 21/26 28 JAN 5/9 10/16 18/23 25 FEB 4/9 12/16 FIELD WORK DATES  
 NOV NOV NOV 1 DEC DEC DEC JAN JAN JAN 2 FEB FEB FEB FEB 2 MAR MAR MAR DATES  
 1980 1981

GOVERNMENT RECORD



5/10 12/17 19/24 26 NOV 3/8 10/15 7/12 14/20 21/26 28 JAN 5/9 10/16 18/23 25 FEB 4/9 12/16 FIELD WORK DATES  
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POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS



5/10 12/17 19/24 26 NOV 3/8 10/15 7/12 14/20 21/26 28 JAN 5/9 10/16 FIELD WORK DATES  
 NOV NOV NOV 1 DEC DEC DEC JAN JAN JAN 2 FEB FEB FEB FEB 2 MAR MAR MAR DATES  
 1980 1981

MR STEEL IS  
 A GOOD LIBERAL LEADER  
 SATISFIED WITH  
 MRS THATCHER  
 MR FOOT IS A  
 POOR OPPOSITION  
 LEADER