

Conservative Research Department

CRD Briefs

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KB/sgc

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr Derek Howe
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London SW1

CONFIDENTIAL

30th April 1981

Dear Derek,

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 60/61

I attach the note setting out the results of our Gallup 'tracking' studies conducted during the weeks 8/13 April and 15/21 April. It is interesting to note that these surveys found no significant change in the level of support for the Social Democrats.

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D.K. Britto

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PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 60/61

(produced 26th April 1981)

1. Introduction

Due to the Easter holiday it was not possible to produce a Public Opinion Background Note last week - this note summarises the results of our 'tracking' studies conducted 8/13 April and 15/21 April. The results of the 8/13 April survey are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on 16th April 1981. When asked how they would vote the proportion of the electorate claiming (unprompted) that they would vote for the Social Democrats showed very little change from the results of our previous tracking study conducted 31 March/6 April which found 17% of the electorate claiming they would vote for them. The 8/13 April survey found 17% of the electorate claiming they would vote Social Democrat and the 15/21 April survey 16%. Support for the Conservative Party also showed very little change over the three week period - 26% 31st March/6th April, 27% 8/13 April and 26% 15/21 April. The proportion of the electorate claiming they would support Labour increased from 29% (31st March/ 6th April) to 31% 8/13 April to 34% 15/21 April. Liberal support fluctuated slightly but has shown no significant change since early March - it stood at 16% 12/16 March and 16% 15/21 April. It should be noted that the percentages considered above include don't knows - the figures published in the Daily Telegraph as the results of the 8/13 April poll have been re-percentage'd to exclude don't knows.

When the idea of a Social Democratic Party was specifically presented to respondents, Gallup found in the week 31st March/ 6th April 26% claiming they would vote for it, 27% in the week 8/13 April and 22% in the week 15/21 April.

When the idea of a Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance was put to candidates in the week 31st March/6th April 35% claimed they would vote for a candidate standing for such a Party, 37% in the week 8/13 April and 34% in the week 15/21 April.

VOTING INTENTION
(including don't knows)

	<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>18/23</u>	<u>25/30</u>	<u>31 Mar</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/21</u>
	Feb	Feb	Feb	2 Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	6 Apr	Apr	Apr
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	31	32	30	28	27	27	23	27	26	27	26
Labour	35	31	35	32	32	30	31	27	29	31	34
Liberal	18	17	19	19	18	16	15	16	15	13	16
Others	7	8	8	9	3	4	2	3	3	2	2
Social Democratic Party*	-	-	-	-	12	12	17	17	17	17	16
Social Democratic/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	9	12	9	12	8	11	12	12	10	10	9

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC 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>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25/30</u>	<u>31 Mar</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/21</u>
	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>2 Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>6 Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	23	24	22	22	21	18	21	21	22	22
Labour	25	23	25	25	25	22	22	20	21	24	25
Liberal	11	12	11	13	12	11	11	10	10	10	11
Others	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Social Democratic Party	22	21	22	21	25	25	27	29	26	27	22
Social Democratic/ Liberal alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	19	16	17	14	16	17	20	20	20	17	19

VOTING INTENTION IS 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>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25/30</u>	<u>31 Mar</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/21</u>
	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>2 Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>6 Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	23	20	22	20	17	20	20	21	21
Labour	24	22	23	24	24	21	22	19	20	23	24
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1
Social Democratic Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democratic/ Liberal alliance	33	36	34	35	36	37	38	37	35	37	34
Don't know/it depends	19	18	20	20	17	21	22	22	23	17	20

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.

2. Standard Voting Intention

The trend in support for the main parties in the standard Gallup voting intention question (excluding don't knows) is shown in the table on the following page and in the attached graphs. Labour's lead has widened from 3.0% 31 March/6 April to 5% 8/3 April to 9% 15/21 April. Our latest survey (unpublished) shows the Liberals as having pushed the Social Democrats

VOTING INTENTION

	<u>CON</u> %	<u>LAB</u> %	<u>LIB</u> %	<u>SOCIAL DEMOCRAT</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	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	29.5	34.5	14.0	19.0	3.0	-5.0**
15/21 April	28.5	37.5	17.5	15.0	1.5	-9.0

* First Gallup Post-election survey

** Published Polls.

3. Government Record

Recent weeks have found almost no change in the level of approval for the record of the Government - 26% approved of our record 31st March/ 6 April, 24% 8/13 April and 25% 15/21 April.

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	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

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

No significant changes in the popularity of the leaders of the three main parties - Mr Foot remains extremely unpopular.

	<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>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
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

5. Published Polls

(a) System Three (Glasgow Herald 14th April 1981)

A System Three poll conducted in Scotland between 21st and 31st March looked at voting intention among the Scottish electorate. They found the following pattern of response.

	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>FEB</u>	<u>GENERAL ELECTION</u>
	<u>1981</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>MAY 1979</u>
	%	%	%
Conservative	17	19	31
Labour	46	47	42
S.N.P.	22	18	17
Liberal	10	13	9
Others	5	-	-

When the idea of a Social Democratic Party was put to respondents by System Three they found 38% claiming they would still vote Labour, 20% Social Democratic, 19% S.N.P., 14% Conservative and 8% Liberal.

(b) Marplan (Guardian 22nd April 1981)

A Marplan poll published in the Guardian on 22nd April 1981 and conducted on April 16th 1981 looked at public attitudes to a range of defence related issues. Marplan found 56% of the electorate taking the view that we should maintain our current nuclear weapon capability, 18% improve our capability, 23% abandon this capability (3% did not answer).

Q. Should Britain abandon nuclear weapons altogether, no matter what other countries do: b) maintain its current nuclear capability; or c) improve it by spending more money on nuclear weapons?

Responses were:

	TOTAL %	AGE			SEX		VOTING INTENTION		
		18-34 %	35-64 %	65+ %	Male %	Female %	Con %	Lab %	Lib/SD %
Abandon	23	28	19	22	24	21	10	29	24
Maintain	56	52	62	51	50	62	66	52	60
Improve	18	19	17	20	25	12	23	17	14
Don't Know	3	1	2	7	1	5	1	2	2

When Marplan asked respondents 'Bearing in mind the current international situation on the one hand and Britain's economic situation on the other, do you think we should be increasing military spending, or holding it at its present level or should we cut it?'. 28% wanted military spending increased, 47% hold military spending level and 20% cut military spending (5% did not know).

When asked about reactions to the Government's decision to purchase the Trident missile system - 32% approved, 53% disapproved and 15% did not have a view. On the question of the deployment of cruise missiles - 41% approved, 50% disapproved and 9% did not have a view.

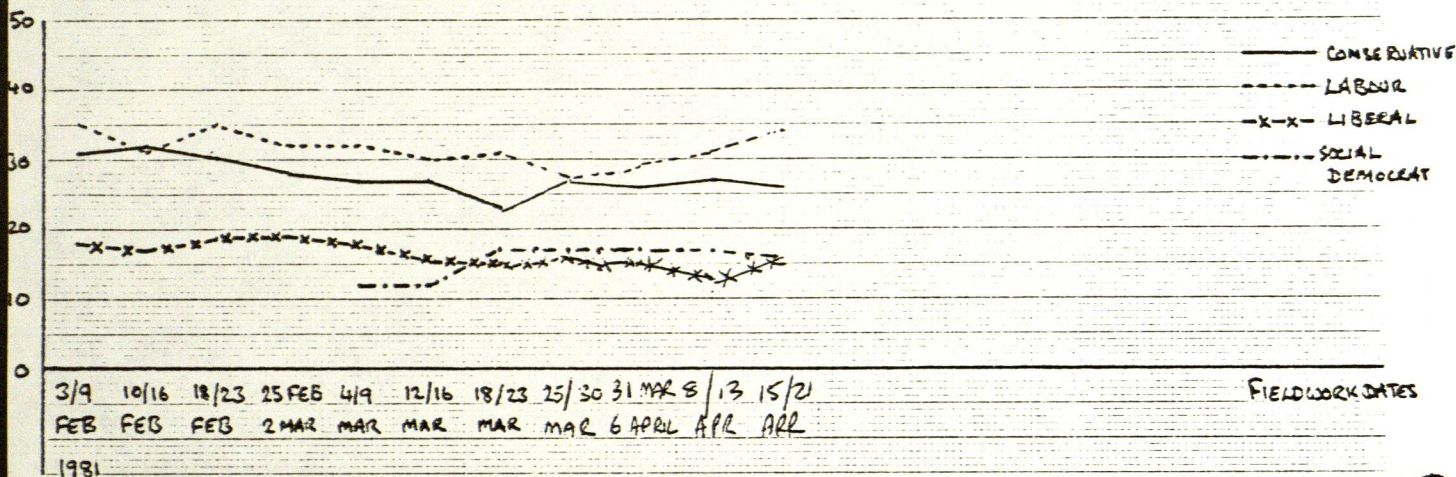
Marplan asked respondents whether they wanted the British army in Northern Ireland to pull out, 31% wanted it to stay, 58% pull out and 11% did not have a view.

(c) NOP (Observer 26th April 1981)

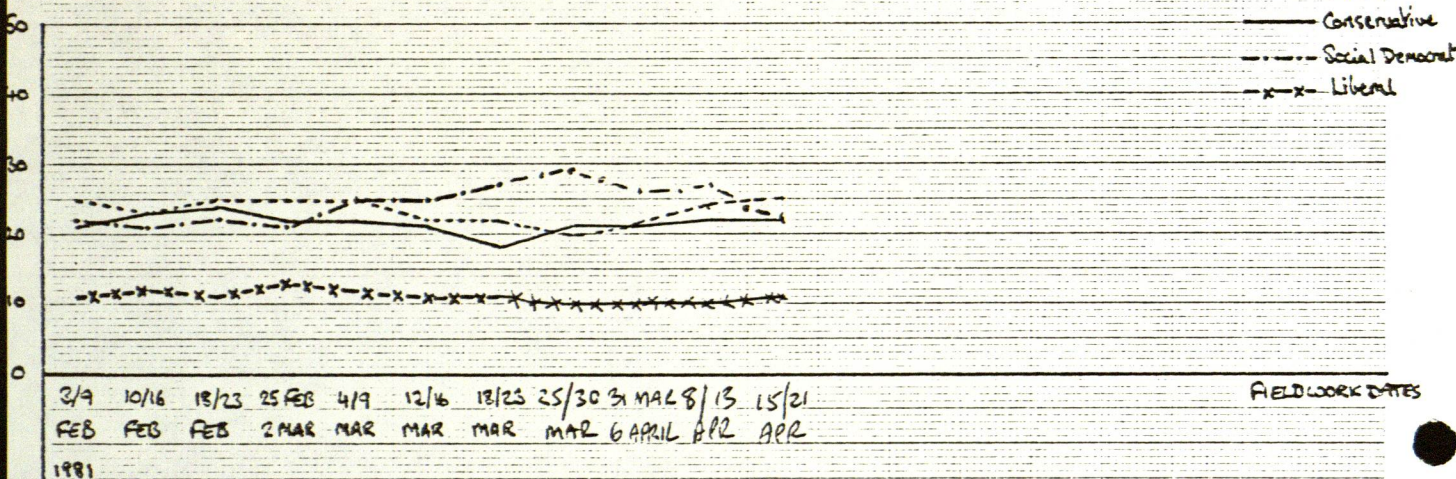
An NOP poll published in the Observer on 26th April 1981 and conducted on 21st April found a very high level of support for the idea of a new style work-based national service - 84% thought this was a 'very good' or 'good' idea. The main reason for supporting the idea was that it would keep crime off the streets.

BACKGROUND GRAPHS

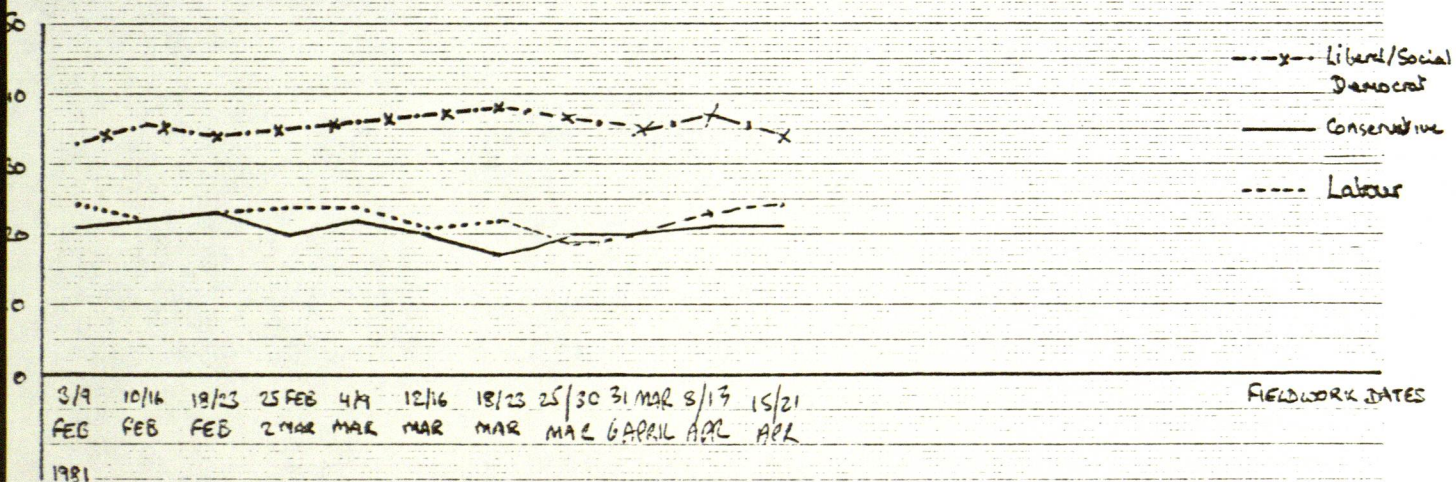
STANDARD VOTING INTENTION



VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

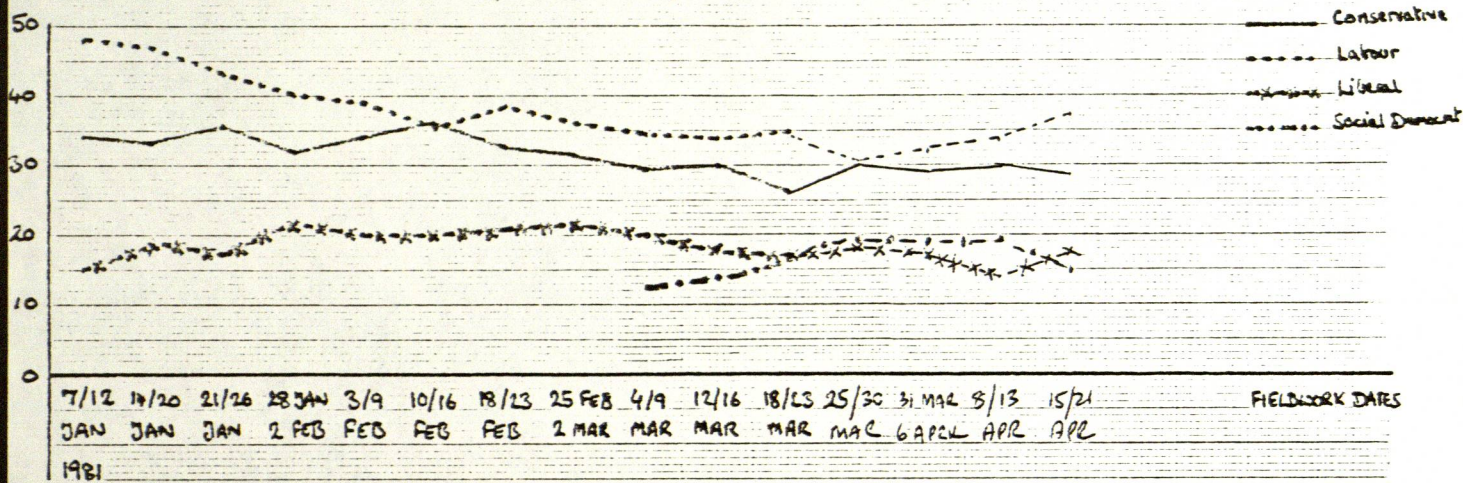


VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC / LIBERAL CANDIDATE

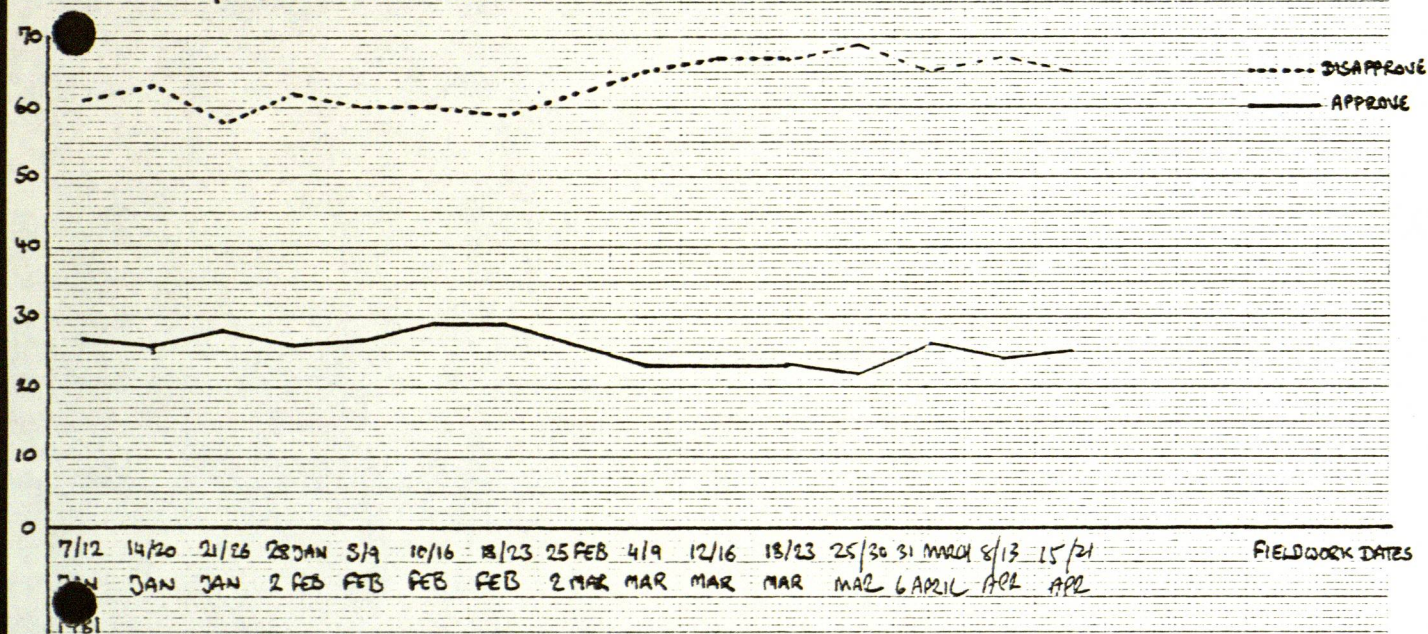


BACKGROUND GRAPHS

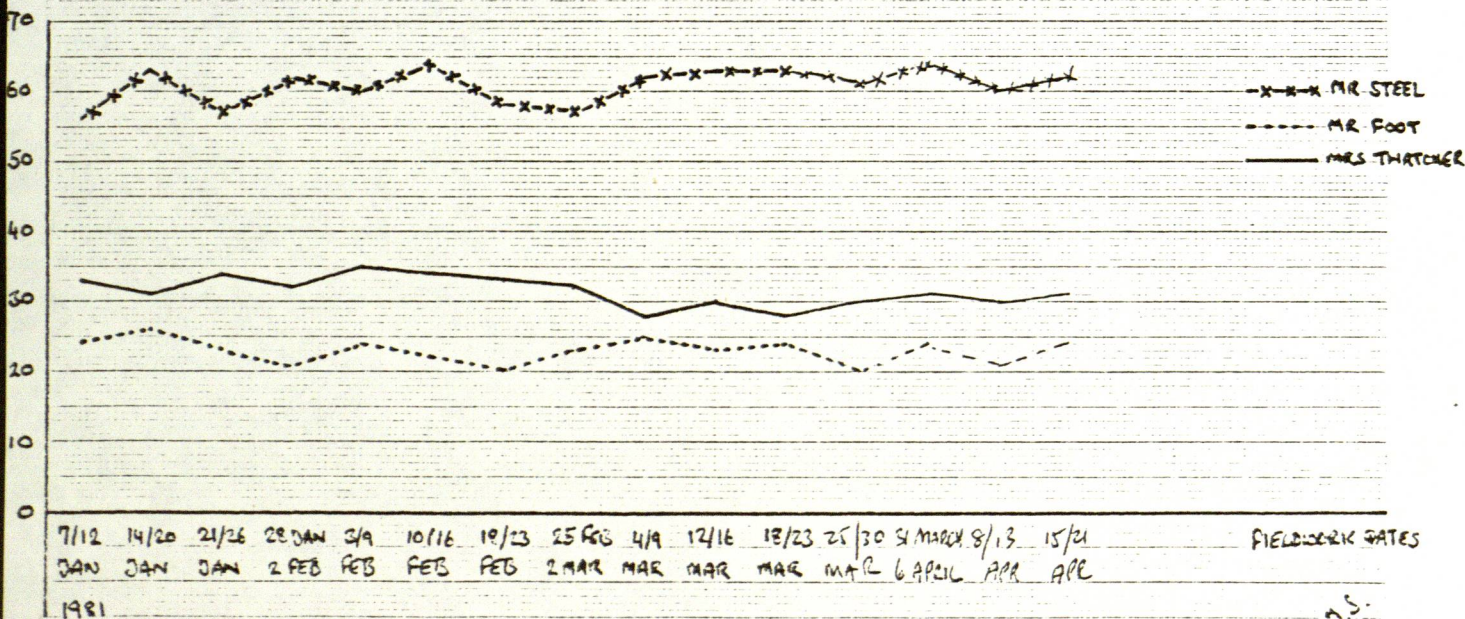
VOTING INTENTION (estimating, etc. figures)



GOVERNMENT RECORD



POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS



J.S.