

# Conservative Research Department

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CONFIDENTIAL

10th September 1981

*Dear Derek,*

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 80

Public Opinion Background Note 80, attached, includes the results of our latest Gallup 'tracking' study conducted from 26th to 31st August. The note also includes details of the Gallup survey on attitudes to trade unions and trade union reform conducted in the lead-up to the TUC Conference.

*Yours  
D. K. Britto*

D. K. Britto

Atc.

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 80  
(produced 6th September 1981)

1. Introduction

The latest survey in our weekly Gallup 'tracking' series, conducted 26th to 31st August, found a 15% Labour lead compared with 5% in the previous week (19/24 August). Support for both the Conservative, Liberals and Social Democrats all fell slightly. The results of voting intention surveys conducted during August should be treated with a degree of caution as the absence of large numbers of electors on holiday tends to have a distorting effect.

Full details of the level of support for the main parties in response to our three standard voting intention questions are shown below - these tables include 'don't knows' as a separate category

VOTING INTENTION  
(including don't knows)

	<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>	<u>26 May</u>	<u>3/8</u>	<u>9/15</u>	<u>16/22</u>
	<u>6 Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>5 May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>1 June</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>June</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Conservative	26	27	26	27	29	29	31	28	28	28	27	29
Labour	29	31	34	32	31	32	33	35	33	36	34	33
Liberal	15	13	16	13	15	16	16	14	17	13	16	14
Others	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2
Social Democrat Party	17	17	16	14	12	10	10	11	12	11	11	11
Don't know/it depends	10	16	9	12	11	9	8	9	9	10	10	10

	<u>24/30</u>	<u>1/6</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/20</u>	<u>22/27</u>	<u>29 July</u>	<u>5/10</u>	<u>12/17</u>	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>
	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>3 Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Conservative	26	27	27	26	24	23	24	25	26	23
Labour	35½	35	36	32	35	36	33	34	31	36
Liberal	15	12	13	14	12	11	14	12	15	13
Others	2	3	3	3	2	2	4	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	10½	11	11	15	19	19	16	17	16	14
Don't know/it depends	10	11	11	10	9	9	10	11	10	12

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE  
(including don't knows)

	<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>	<u>26 May</u>	<u>3/8</u>	<u>9/15</u>
	<u>6 Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>5 May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>1 June</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>June</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	22	23	25	23	25	23	21	22	23
Labour	21	24	25	24	25	24	27	26	27	27	28
Liberal	10	10	11	9	10	11	11	10	12	9	12
Others	2	1	1	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	1
Social Democrat Party	26	27	22	24	21	21	20	21	20	23	20
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	20	17	19	18	15	18	15	18	17	17	16

	<u>16/22</u>	<u>24/30</u>	<u>1/6</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/20</u>	<u>22/27</u>	<u>29 July</u>	<u>5/10</u>	<u>12/17</u>	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>
	<u>June</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>3 Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	23	21	22	21	21	18	20	20	20	21	20
Labour	28	31	29	29	28	28	30	27	27	25	28
Liberal	11	11	8	9	11	9	7	8	8	11	9
Others	2	1½	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1
Social Democrat Party	19	19	20	20	23	29	26	25	26	25	24
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/ it depends	16	16½	16	18	16	16	15	18	18	16	18

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC/LIBERAL ALLIANCE

	<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>	<u>26 May</u>	<u>3/8</u>	<u>9/15</u>
	<u>6 Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>5 May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>1 June</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>June</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	20	21	21	22	21	22	24	23	20	21	22
Labour	20	23	24	24	24	22	25	25	25	27	17
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	35	37	34	33	32	32	32	31	33	32	30
Don't know/it depends	23	17	20	18	20	22	16	19	19	18	19

	<u>16/22</u>	<u>24/30</u>	<u>1/6</u>	<u>8/13</u>	<u>15/20</u>	<u>22/27</u>	<u>29 July</u>	<u>5/10</u>	<u>12/17</u>	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>
	<u>June</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>3 Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Aug</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	24	20	22	20	21	18	20	20	19	21	19
Labour	27	29	28	27	27	27	29	25	27	25	27
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance	28	32	28	31	33	37	33	33	33	35	31
Don't know/it depends	19	18	19	19	18	16	16	19	19	18	22

2. Standard Voting Intention

The table below shows on the same basis as used for the presentation of Gallup figures in the Daily Telegraph the level of support for the main parties.

	<u>VOTING INTENTION</u> (excluding don't knows)					
	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>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	-	5.0	-9.0
<u>1981</u>						
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
26 May/1 June	30.0	36.0	18.0	13.0	3.0	-6.0
3/8 June	31.0	40.0	14.0	12.5	2.5	-9.0
9/15 June	29.5	37.5	18.0	12.5	2.5	-8.0**
16/22 June	32.0	37.0	15.5	13.0	2.5	-5.0
24/30 June	29.0	40.0	17.0	12.0	2.0	-11.0
1/6 July	30.5	39.5	14.0	13.0	3.0	-9.0
8/13 July	30.0	40.5	14.5	12.0	3.0	-10.5**
15/20 July	29.0	36.0	16.0	17.0	2.0	-7.0
22/27 July	26.0	38.0	13.0	21.0	2.0	-12.0
29 July/ 3 Aug	25.5	40.0	11.5	20.5	2.5	-14.5
5/10 August	27.0	36.0	15.0	18.0	4.0	-9.0
12/17 August	28.0	38.5	13.0	19.0	1.5	-10.5**
19/24 August	29.0	34.0	17.0	18.0	2.0	-5.0
26/31 August	26.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	2.0	-15.0

\* First Gallup post-Election survey

\*\* Published Polls

3. Government Record

The level of approval for the record of the Government fell back to what it had been before the improvement we found in our last tracking study. Details below.

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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>			
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
26 May/1 June	27	61	12
3/8 June	26	60	14
9/15 June	26	63	11
16/22 June	29	59	12
24/30 June	23	67	10
1/6 July	24	63	13
8/13 July	23	66	11
15/20 July	23	66	11
22/27 July	23	66	11
29 July/ 3 August	23	65	12
5/10 August	23	64	13
12/17 August	23	66	11
19/24 August	26	64	10
26/31 August	23	64	13

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest study found a fall in Mrs Thatcher's popularity back to the level we found in late July and early August. Mr Foot's popularity improved slightly in our latest study and Mr Steel's popularity fell slightly.

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>1981</u>									
31 March/ 6 April	31	63	6	24	55	22	64	17	19
6/13 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
26 May/ 1 June	32	62	6	27	54	19	62	17	20
3/8 June	36	58	6	29	41	21	59	19	22
9/15 June	33	61	6	28	48	24	61	18	21
16/22 June	34	60	6	29	50	21	60	20	21
24/30 June	30	65	5	28	52	21	60	19	21
1/6 July	31	62	7	25	54	21	60	17	23
8/13 July	30	65	5	25	52	23	56	20	24
15/20 July	31	65	4	22	59	19	59	19	22
22/27 July	26	68	6	23	55	22	59	21	21
29 July / 3 Aug	27	68	5	26	53	20	57	23	20
5/10 August	30	65	5	27	56	17	62	18	21
12/17 August	28	66	6	23	57	20	61	18	21
19/24 August	33	61	6	25	51	24	63	19	19
26/31 August	28	66	6	29	52	20	60	20	21

## 5. Published Polls

### (a) M.O.R.I. (Sunday Times 6th September 1981)

An M.O.R.I. poll published in the Sunday Times on 6th September and conducted during the period August 17/24 looked at attitudes among the unemployed in the 16 to 21 age group.

M.O.R.I. found that 44% of those interviewed said violence could sometimes be justified and 41% said it could not. When M.O.R.I. asked the same question in 1979 only 30% thought violence could be justified.

Two-thirds of those interviewed by M.O.R.I. blamed unemployment for the recent riots and 28% believed the riots were justified.

M.O.R.I. found few of the sample would choose to remain unemployed if they could get the same money elsewhere. 53% would rather have more training or education and a further 40% would like to start a job straight away. 7% claimed they would prefer to stay on unemployment benefit. 63% of the young people said they would be willing to move away from home if that was the only way to find a job. Only 18% claimed they were not prepared to move.

On the question of pay for young people, M.O.R.I. found that 56% of young people disapproved of employees paying young people less, even if it meant more jobs would be available.

### (b) Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 6th September 1981)

A Gallup poll published in the Sunday Telegraph on 6th September 1981 (conducted 26/31 August) looked at attitudes to the Trade Union Congress and to various aspects of trade union law.

#### i. Problems facing trade unions

Gallup asked respondents 'The Trade Union Congress is meeting soon. What do you think is the most urgent problem facing the trade unions when they meet?' 54% mentioned unemployment, 4% cost of living/prices, 4% strikes/disputes and 4% wage claims. Among Conservative supporters 38% mentioned unemployment, 7% strikes/disputes, 6% getting their policies straightened out, 5% increasing productivity, 4% wage restraint, 4% coming to terms with Government and 1% cost of living/prices. Among Labour supporters 64% mentioned unemployment, 6% cost of living/prices, 5% wage claims. Among Social Democrat supporters 56% mentioned unemployment, 4% strikes/disputes and only 2% cost of living/prices. Among Liberal supporters 56% mentioned unemployment, 6% strikes/disputes, 5% coming to terms with Government, 4% wage claims and only 3% cost of living/prices.

#### ii. General Attitudes to Trade Unions

When asked 'Generally speaking, and thinking of Britain as a whole, do you think that trade unions are a good thing or a bad thing?' Gallup found 56% thought they are a good thing, 28% a bad thing and 16% did not have a view. 40% of Conservative supporters saw trade unions as a good thing (46% a bad thing), among Labour supporters 71% saw them as a good thing (14% a bad thing), among Liberal supporters 45% saw them as a good thing (34% bad thing) and among Social Democrats 69% saw them as a good thing (28% bad thing).

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When asked 'Do you think trade unions are too powerful, are not powerful enough or are about right?' Gallup found 60% saw them as being too powerful, 10% not powerful 23% as being about right and 6% did not have a view.

### iii Trade Union Leadership

22% of respondents thought trade union leadership are representative of the views of ordinary trade unionists - 10% of Conservatives took this view as did 35% of Labour supporters, 16% of Liberal supporters and 20% of Social Democrats. 60% of respondents thought trade union leaders are not representative of the views of ordinary trade union members - 81% of Conservative supporters 41% of Labour supporters, 62% of Liberal supporters and 67% of Social Democrat supporters took this view.

### iv. Attitudes of Conservative Government to Trade Unions

57% of respondents thought that the Conservative Government is hostile to trade unions, 30% that they are not hostile and 13% did not have a view. 35% of Conservative supporters saw the present Government being hostile to trade unions, 72% of Labour supporters took the same view as did 52% of Liberal supporters and 65% of Social Democrats.

When Gallup asked respondents 'Do you think that in the future relations between the Conservative Government and Trade Unions will improve, worsen or stay the same?' - 12% thought they would improve, 39% worsen, 38% stay the same and 10% did not have a view.

### v. Trade Union Reform

When Gallup asked respondents whether they approved of the Government's plans to reform trade union law, they found:

#### Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's plans to reform Trade Union Law?

	<u>August</u> 1981	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>
	%	%	%
Approve	43	49	54
Disapprove	26	28	20
Don't know	31	23	26

When asked whether they thought the Government's plans to reform trade union law are helping or harming industrial relations in the country - 18% thought they are helping, 44% harming, 9% have no effect and 28% did not have a view.

#### Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's plans to reform Trade Union Law?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Conservative</u> Supporters	<u>Labour</u> Supporters	<u>Liberal</u> Supporters	<u>Social Democrat</u> Supporters
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	43	72	22	46	57
Disapprove	26	8	42	28	22
Don't know	30	20	36	28	21

Do you think that the Government's plans to reform Trade Union Law are helping or harming industrial relations in this country?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Social Democrat</u>
		<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Helping	18	33	11	17	22
Harming	44	30	54	44	47
No effect	9	11	6	11	9
Don't know	28	27	29	29	22

When asked about attitudes to various aspects of trade union reform, Gallup found:-

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
No strikes to be called unless there is a postal ballot of union members involved (%)	81	8	11
A ban on secondary picketing that is a ban on picketing a company directly involved in a strike (%)	66	22	12
A Closed Shop should be established only if a majority of the workers vote for it (%)	65	22	13
Removal of the rights of those in key public service industries to strike in return for guaranteed wage increases	48	31	21
Public money to be used to encourage a wide use of trade union secret ballots (%)	40	42	18

Trade Union members had a similar profile of support for the various reform measures.

vi. Picketing

When asked whether they thought workers on strike at a factory or a company should or should not be able to picket the factory - 76% thought they should be able to.

When asked 'Do you think that people who are not employed by a particular factory or company where there is a strike should or should not be able to support it by joining the pickets' - 74% thought they should not be able to.

vii Wage Increases

When asked 'In the present situation, should the trade unions hold back wage claims or go ahead with them' - 49% thought they should hold back, 37% go ahead and 14% did not have a view.

When Gallup asked respondents 'As a measure to control inflation would you yourself be willing or not to accept (a) a wage increase over the next 12 months that is about half the rise in the cost of living (b) no wage increase at all over the next 6 months', they found 52% saying they would accept a wage increase less than the rate of inflation. 39% said they would accept no wage increase, 36% would not accept having no increase, 8% if everyone did and 18% did not have a view.