

Conservative Research Department



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Director: ALAN HOWARTH

15th August 1980

Richard Ryder, Esq.,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1.

Dear Richard,

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTES 26-28

I thought a copy of the results from our tracking research for the period just before the House rose for the Summer recess might be of interest. I would particularly draw your attention to the sharp increase in the Labcur lead after the publication of the unemployment figures on 22nd July. The lead has apparently declined sharply in early August.

*Yours
Keith*

KEITH BRITTO

CONFIDENTIAL

Public Opinion Background Notes
26-28 (Produced 10th August 1980)

1. Introduction.

Due to holidays, it has not been possible to circulate the findings of the results from our Gallup 'tracking' exercise for the last three weeks. This note includes details of tracking studies conducted 16-21 July, 23-28 July and 30 July-4 August and shows in some detail what has happened to public opinion since the last published Gallup poll - Daily Telegraph (17 July 1980). It is interesting to note the 15½% Labour lead we found in our survey conducted on 23/28 July and the close link between this jump in Labour's lead and the publication of the unemployment figures on 22 July. The results from our 23/28 July tracking study can be compared with the findings of the M.O.R.I. study published in the Sunday Times on 10 August 1980, but conducted on July 24-29, which found a 10% Labour lead. Our very latest tracking study, conducted from 30 July to 4 August found a sharp drop in Labour's lead to 4% - a figure very much in line with the trend we had been finding before the publication of the unemployment figures. As always with any tracking exercise, we need to await the results of the next study before being in a position of being confident about the return to the pre-unemployment figures trend.

2. Voting Intention.

Full details of the trend in support for the main parties from both published Gallup polls and our unpublished Gallup 'tracking' studies are shown both in the table below and in the attached graphs.

Voting Intention

	<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	43.5	12	2.5	-1.5
<u>1980</u>					
2/8 April	39	45	13	3	-6
10/14 April	36.5	45	15	3.5	-8.5**
16/21 April	41	43	14.5	1.5	-2
23/28 April	39	44	14	3	-5
30/6 May	39	42	17	2	-3
7/12 May	40	45	13	2	-5
15 April/9 May	39	43.5	15.5	2	-4.5**
21/27 May	40	43	13.5	3.5	-3
28 May/2 June	36	46	15	4	-10
4/9 June	39.5	43	15.5	2	-3.5
11/16 June	40.5	45	11.5	3	-4.5**
18/23 June	39	43	15	3	-4
25/30 June	37	45	15	3	-8

	<u>Con</u> %	<u>Lab</u> %	<u>Lib</u> %	<u>Other</u> %	<u>Lead</u> %
1980 (cont.)					
2/7 July	37.5	44.5	14.5	3.5	-7
10/14 July	40	43.5	14	2.5	-3.5**
16/21 July	37	44.5	15	3.5	-7.5
23/28 July	33.5	49	14	3.5	-15.5
30 July/4 August	38.5	42.5	16	3	-4

* First Gallup post-election survey

** Published polls.

The 4% Labour lead in our latest tracking study can be compared with Labour's 18% lead in June 1971, 21½% lead in July 1971, 4½% lead in August 1971 and 19% lead in September 1971.

3. Government Record

Slight fluctuation in Government popularity over recent weeks, but no significant changes.

For full details, please see table below and attached graphs.

Government Record

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June*	34	41	25
<u>1980</u>			
2/8 April	36	51	13
10/14 April	36	52	12
16/21 April	38	50	12
23/28 April	34	54	12
30 April/5 May	36	51	13
7/12 May	37	50	13
15/19 May	37	52	11
21/27 May	37	51	12
28 May/2 June	34	55	11
4/9 June	35	54	11
11/16 June	35	52	13
18/24 June	33	55	12
25/30 June	31	56	13
2/7 July	31	56	13
10/14 July	33	54	13
16/21 July	35	52	13
23/28 July	31	58	12
30 July/4 August	34	53	13

* First Post Election Survey

The 34% of the electorate approving of our record to date compares very favourably with the 22% of the electorate approving of the then Conservative Government's record in June 1971, this increased to 26% in July 1971, increased further to 35% in August 1971, but fell back to 30% in September 1971.

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Our latest tracking study found 40% of the electorate satisfied with Mrs. Thatcher's record as Prime Minister, compared with 47% satisfied with Mr. Callaghan as Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Callaghan's popularity has been declining almost consistently since early May - while Mrs. Thatcher's popularity has remained remarkably stable.

In early August, 55% of the electorate approved of Mr. Steel's record as Leader of the Liberals - the same as in early April.

Details of trends in popularity of the three main political leaders are shown in the table below and in the attached graphs.

Popularity of Political Leaders

	<u>Mrs. Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr. Callaghan</u>			<u>Mr. Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2/8 April	41	54	5	56	31	12	55	19	26
10/14 April	41	54	5	55	33	12	60	19	21
16/21 April	43	51	7	52	34	14	59	17	25
23/28 April	40	54	6	52	33	14	57	18	25
30 Apr-2 May	45	51	5	53	32	15	57	17	26
7/12 May	44	49	6	57	31	13	59	20	21
15/19 May	44	51	5	51	36	13	61	19	20
21/27 May	43	51	7	50	37	14	57	18	24
28 May/2June	41	54	5	51	35	15	58	17	25
-4/9 June	40	55	5	50	38	12	59	19	22
11/16 June	43	52	5	48	37	15	57	18	25
18/23 June	40	55	6	44	42	13	57	20	23
25/30 June	39	55	5	45	41	13	55	20	25
2/7 July	38	56	6	45	42	13	61	19	20
10/14 July	41	51	7	46	41	13	53	24	23
16/21 July	39	54	7	49	35	16	55	18	27
23/28 July	35	57	8	52	35	13	55	17	27
30 July/4Aug	40	54	6	47	38	15	55	20	25.

5. Issues

In recent tracking studies, we have been asking our respondents for their views on a range of current issues in terms of whether the issues make them more favourably inclined towards the Government, less favourably inclined or they make no difference. The issues we include in this question are based on the answers to our standard open-ended tracking question, 'Over the last seven days have you seen or heard anything that has made you feel more favourably or less favourably inclined towards the Government? Details of the answers we have obtained in the recent weeks are given on the following page:-

Issues

	<u>10/14</u> <u>July</u> %	<u>16/21</u> <u>July</u> %	<u>23/28</u> <u>July</u> %	<u>30 July-</u> <u>4 Aug.</u> %
<u>Mrs. Thatcher</u> <u>as Prime Minister</u>				
More favourable	30	28	26	29
Less favourable	45	41	47	43
No difference	24	29	25	26
Don't know	1	3	3	2
<u>The Government's</u> <u>Taxation Policy</u>				
More favourable	27	24	25	-
Less favourable	43	42	44	-
No difference	21	22	20	-
Don't know	9	12	12	-
<u>The Government's</u> <u>Policy on Trade</u> <u>Union Reform</u>				
More favourable	45	43	44	46
Less favourable	30	29	27	24
No difference	11	12	11	13
Don't know	14	16	18	16
<u>The Government's</u> <u>Policy on the</u> <u>Olympic Games</u>				
More favourable	28	29	26	23
Less favourable	53	49	57	55
No difference	11	13	11	14
Don't know	8	9	6	8
<u>Public Spending</u> <u>Cuts</u>				
More favourable	27	23	24	28
Less favourable	57	60	59	56
No difference	11	11	10	11
Don't know	5	7	7	6
<u>The Cost of</u> <u>Living</u>				
More favourable	11	8	10	8
Less favourable	69	70	68	65
No difference	17	19	19	21
Don't know	3	3	3	5
<u>The Government's</u> <u>Policy on the</u> <u>Common Market</u>				
More favourable	35	34	27	-
Less favourable	40	37	43	-
No difference	14	15	15	-
Don't know	11	13	16	-

	<u>10/14</u> <u>July</u> %	<u>16/21</u> <u>July</u> %	<u>23/28</u> <u>July</u> %	<u>30 July-</u> <u>4 Aug.</u> %
<u>The Level of Unemployment</u>				
More favourable	5	6	5	6
Less favourable	77	71	76	72
No difference	15	17	15	18
Don't know	3	7	4	5
<u>The Government's Pay Policy</u>				
More favourable	27	29	25	30
Less favourable	41	38	42	39
No difference	17	18	17	16
Don't know	15	16	16	15
<u>M.P.'s Pay</u>				
More favourable	23	22	21	20
Less favourable	47	48	47	49
No difference	20	20	21	20
Don't know	10	10	11	11
<u>Top People's Pay</u>				
More favourable	-	18	14	15
Less favourable	-	53	55	52
No difference	-	20	18	22
Don't know	-	9	13	11
<u>The Government's Policies on the Post Office</u>				
More favourable	-	-	33	33
Less favourable	-	-	30	29
No difference	-	-	13	17
Don't know	-	-	24	22
<u>The Government's Policy on selling Council Houses</u>				
More favourable	-	-	-	51
Less favourable	-	-	-	23
No difference	-	-	-	19
Don't know	-	-	-	7
<u>The Government's Policy of introducing Private Enterprise into some Nationalised Industries</u>				
More favourable	-	-	-	53
Less favourable	-	-	-	22
No difference	-	-	-	9
Don't know	-	-	-	15

Our policy on Trade Union reform remains popular, but it is also interesting to note the favourable light with which our policies on the Post Office and introducing private enterprise into some nationalised industries are viewed. As could have been easily predicted, our policies on the sale of council houses remain popular.

6. Published Polls

Apart from the M.O.R.I. poll published in the Sunday Times (10 August 1980), the only other published opinion poll of political interest was a N.O.P. poll published in the Observer (10th August 1980). This poll found that among Labour supporters, only 25% thought it would be a good thing if the Labour Party split and a new centre Party was formed - 63% thought it would be a bad thing and 12% gave no answer. When asked about Mr. Callaghan, 52% of intending Labour voters wanted him to lead the Labour Party at the next election.

N.O.P. interviewed just under 2,000 electors on 7th August.

DKB/cc
12.8.80.

