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CONFIDENTIAL

5th October 1981

Dear Derek,

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 84

The interviewing for our latest Gallup tracking study was conducted from 23rd to 28th September and just overlapped with the start of the Labour Party Conference.

The survey found a sharp further increase in the level of support for the Social Democrats. In response to the standard voting intention question we found 33½% of the electorate claiming they would vote Labour, 24½% Conservative, 24% Social Democrat and 16½% Liberal. These figures have been recalculated to exclude those respondents who did not give a voting intention.

*Yours
D. K. Britto*

D. K. Britto

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PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 84
(produced 4th October 1981)

1. Introduction

The regular weekly 'tracking' studies the Conservative Party purchases from Gallup provide a detailed insight into the trend of support for the main parties both in the electorate as a whole and in the main socio-economic groups. Unlike the majority of opinion polls published in the newspapers and conducted for television programmes, the Party's 'tracking' studies permit us to examine in detail what has happened to the level of support for the main parties in response to particular events e.g. party conferences.

2. Voting Intention

The interviewing for the latest 'tracking' study was conducted from 23rd to 28th September and overlapped the start of the Labour Party Conference - however the interviews were completed well before the start of the Social Democratic Conference. It found a further increase in unprompted support to the Social Democrats with 24% of the electorate claiming they would vote for them, 24½% said they would vote Conservative, 33½% Labour and 16½% Liberal. These figures have been re-calculated to exclude those electors who did not answer the voting intention question - this is the conventional way of presenting voting intention figures. Support for the Social Democrats has been increasing weekly since late August and has been tending to edge upwards since the Warrington by-election. This latest study found, on an unprompted voting intention question, the Social Democrats within half a percentage point of pushing us into third place to Labour. Our last survey conducted before the Warrington by-election (8/13 July) found 12% of the electorate claiming they would vote Social Democrat, the first survey after the by-election (15/20 July) found 17% claiming they would vote for them. By 1/7 September 16% claimed they would vote S.D. - this increased to 17½% 9/14 September, 19% 16/21 September and to 24% in our latest study conducted from 23rd to 28th September. Support for the Liberals, although fluctuating slightly from week to week, has tended since early summer to be in the 14 to 16% range and our latest study found 16½% claiming they would vote Liberal.

Support for Labour has been showing a downward trend since early September - 41% 1/7 September, 36½% 9/14 September, 36½% 16/21 September and 33½% 23/28 September. Apart from a sharp jump in support in the week 9/14 September, support for the Conservatives has remained at around the 25% level since late August.

Details of the trend in support for the main parties since the beginning of June are shown in the table on the following page. It should be noted that these figures are calculated on the same basis as the Gallup voting intention figures published in the Daily Telegraph - they exclude don't knows.

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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	-	5.0	-9.0
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
1/7 September	25.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	3.0	-16.0
9/14 September	32.0	36.5	11.5	17.5	2.5	-4.5**
16/21 September	25.0	36.5	16.0	19.0	3.5	-11.5
23/28 September	24.5	33.5	16.5	24.0	1.5	-9.0

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

The analysis of our weekly Gallup surveys, as well as providing a measure of the overall level of support for the parties, also allows us to examine the level of support in the main socio-economic groups. Details are shown below-

(a) Sex

	<u>All</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
	%	%	%
Conservative	24½	22½	26
Labour	33½	33	33½
Liberal	16½	13½	19½
Social Democrats	24	28½	19
Others	1½	2½	2

Support for Labour is almost equal among men and women. Whilst a higher proportion of women than men support the Conservative and Liberal Parties, support for the Social Democrats is considerably higher among men than women.

(b) Age

	<u>All</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	24½	21	24	25	29½
Labour	33½	37	31	30	34
Liberal	16½	14	19	18	17
Social Democrats	24	25½	23½	25	18
Others	1½	2½	2½	2	1½

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With the exception of the 65+ age groups, support for the Social Democrats is fairly evenly spread across the age groups. Support for the Liberals is lowest in the 18-34 age groups. Conservative support is higher in the older age groups - 21% 18-34, 24% 35-44, 25% 45-64 and 29½% 65+. Support for Labour is highest in the 18-34 age groups but also remains strong in the 65% group.

(c) Social Class

	<u>All</u>	<u>ABC1</u>	<u>C2</u>	<u>DE</u>
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	24½	38	17	14
Labour	33½	13	41	51½
Liberal	16½	19	16½	14
Social Democrats	24	27	24	19
Others	1½	3	1½	1½

Support for the Conservatives is highest in the ABC1 group but even here in our 'heartland' group 27% claim they will vote Social Democrat and 19% Liberal. Our support among the C2 (skilled workers), one of the key factors in our victory in May 1979 is now down to 17% - 41% of this group claim they would vote Labour, 24% Social Democrat and 16½% Liberal. Among the DE group our support at 14% is equal to that obtained by the Liberals - 51½% of the group claim they will vote Labour and 19% Social Democrat.

(d) Home Tenure

	<u>All</u>	<u>Own or Buying</u>	<u>Council</u>
	%	on Mortgage	%
		%	
Conservative	24½	31	10
Labour	33½	21½	54
Liberal	16½	17	17½
Social Democrats	24	28	17½
Others	1½	2½	1

We still have a lead in terms of support among those electors who own their own homes or who are buying their homes on a mortgage - 31% of this group claimed they would vote Conservative, however, 28% supported the Social Democrats, 21½% Labour and 17% Liberal. Among council house tenants, 54% said they would vote Labour, 17½% Liberal, 17½% Social Democrat and 10% Conservative.

(e) Trade Union Membership

	<u>All</u>	<u>Trade</u>	<u>non-Trade</u>
	%	Unionist	Unionist
		%	%
Conservative	24½	16½	29
Labour	33½	37	30½
Liberal	16½	14½	18
Social Democrat	24	29	20½
Others	1½	3½	2

Among trade unionists, 37% claimed they would vote Labour, 29% Social Democrat 16½% Conservative and 14½% Liberal. Among non-trade unionists - 30½% claimed they would support Labour, 29% Conservative, 20½% Social Democrat and 18% Liberal.

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(f) Region

	<u>All</u> %	<u>North</u> %	<u>Midlands</u> %	<u>South</u> %	<u>Scotland</u> %
Conservative	24½	18	22	31	21½
Labour	33½	43	37½	23½	34
Liberal	16½	15½	15	19	16½
Social Democrat	24	23	23½	26	19
Others	1½	1½	2	½	9

In both the North and Midlands we trailed both Labour and the Social Democrats in terms of support. Only 18% of the electorate in Northern England claimed they would vote Conservative (43% Labour, 23% Social Democrat, and 15½% Liberal). In the Midlands (including Wales) 37½% claimed they would vote Labour, 23½% Social Democrat, 22% Conservative and 15% Liberal. In the South we found 31% Conservative 26% Social Democrat, 23½% Labour and 19% Liberal. In Scotland, comparative figures were - 34% Labour, 21½% Conservative, 19% Social Democrat and 16½% Liberal.

Social Democrat support is fairly evenly spread throughout England - ranging from 23% in Northern England to 26% in Southern England. In Scotland, only 19% of the electorate claimed they would vote Social Democrat.

In addition to the standard voting intention (which forms the basis of the analysis considered above) and does not include specific reference to any of the political parties - our Gallup tracking study includes two additional questions as to how respondents would if they could vote (a) for a Social Democrat candidate, or (b) for a Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance candidate. Details of the trend of answers we have obtained in response to these questions are shown below. It should be noted that these particular figures have not been re-calculated to exclude don't knows.

VOTING INTENTION IFSOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE
(including don't knows)

	<u>3/8</u> June	<u>9/15</u> June	<u>16/22</u> June	<u>24/30</u> June	<u>1/6</u> July	<u>8/13</u> July	<u>15/20</u> July	<u>22/27</u> July	<u>29 July</u> 3 Aug	<u>5/10</u> Aug	<u>12/17</u> Aug
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	22	23	23	21	22	21	21	18	20	20	20
Labour	27	28	28	31	29	29	28	28	30	27	27
Liberal	9	12	11	11	8	9	11	9	7	8	8
Others	2	1	2	1½	2	2	2	1	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	23	20	19	19	20	20	23	29	26	25	26
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	17	16	16	16½	16	18	16	16	15	18	18
	<u>19/24</u> Aug	<u>26/31</u> Aug	<u>1/7</u> Sept	<u>9/14</u> Sept	<u>16/21</u> Sept	<u>23/28</u> Sept					
	%	%	%	%	%	%					
Conservative	21	20	19	23	18	18					
Labour	25	28	29	27	27	23					
Liberal	11	9	10	7	11	11					
Others	1	1	2	1	2	1					
Social Democrat Party	25	24	25	24	27	30					
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-					
Don't know/it depends	16	18	15	18	15	17					

VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC/LIBERAL ALLIANCE

	<u>3/8</u>	<u>9/15</u>	<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>
	June	June	June	June	July	July	July	July	3 Aug	Aug	Aug
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	24	20	22	20	21	18	20	20	19
Labour	27	27	27	29	28	27	27	27	29	25	27
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
Social Dem. Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	32	30	28	32	28	31	33	37	33	33	33
Don't know/it depends	18	19	19	18	19	19	18	16	16	19	19

	<u>19/24</u>	<u>26/31</u>	<u>1/7</u>	<u>9/14</u>	<u>16/21</u>	<u>23/28</u>
	Aug	Aug	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	19	20	23	16	18
Labour	25	27	28	26	26	23
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	1	2	1	2	1
Social Democrat Party	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democrat/ Liberal Alliance	35	31	33	32	40	40
Don't know/it depends	18	22	18	18	16	19

When Gallup asked respondents how they would vote if a Social Democrat candidate stood in their constituency - 30% claimed they would vote for such a candidate - 23% Labour, 18% Conservative and 11% Liberal. When the possibility of voting for a candidate from the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance was put to respondents 40% claimed they would vote for such a candidate, 23% Labour and 18% Conservative. Details of the answers to the three standard voting intention question are given below:-

VOTING INTENTION
(23/28 September 1981)

	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Voting if Social</u>	<u>Voting if Social Democratic/</u>
	<u>Voting</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Liberal Alliance Candidate</u>
	<u>Intention</u>	<u>Candidate</u>	
	%	%	%
Conservative	22	18	18
Labour	30	23	23
Liberal	15	11	-
Social Democrat	21	30	-
Social Democrat/Liberal	-	-	40
Others	2	1	1
Don't know	10	17	19

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3. Government Record

The latest 'tracking' study found no change in the level of approval of the record of the government - 21% approved and 66% disapproved. Details are shown in the table below:-

	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1981</u>			
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
1/7 September	23	65	13
9/14 September	26	63	11
16/21 September	21	67	11
23/28 September	21	66	13

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Our latest study found almost no change in Mrs Thatcher's popularity and no change in Mr Steel's popularity. Mr Foot's popularity fell slightly - but is still slightly higher than the lowest point reached in early summer.

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 not</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is not</u>	<u>Don't</u>
	%	sat.	Know	%	%	Know	%	%	Know
<u>1981</u>									
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
1/7 September	28	67	5	29	52	19	63	18	19
9/14 September	32	62	6	28	54	18	56	21	23
16/21 September	27	68	5	28	52	20	64	16	20
23/28 September	28	67	5	25	57	18	64	17	19

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 5 Published Polls

(a) M.O.R.I. (Scotsman 29th September 1981)

The Scotsman on 29th September 1981 included the report of an M.O.R.I. survey conducted in Scotland between September 10th and 15th. M.O.R.I. found in terms of voting intention:-

(i) Standard Voting Intention (unprompted)

	<u>May 1979</u> Election	<u>Feb</u> 1981	<u>May</u> 1981	<u>September</u> 1981
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	31.4	20	23	20
Labour	41.5	44	42	44
Liberal	9.0	14	14	12
S.N.P.	17.3	16	15	13
Social Democrat	-	5	6	10
Others	0.8	1	-	1

(ii) Voting Intention if Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance

	<u>May 1981</u>	<u>September 1981</u>
	%	%
Conservative	18	15
Labour	34	38
S.N.P.	17	13
Liberal/SDP	31	33
Other	-	1

Details of attitudes to aspects of devolution for Scotland are shown below:-

Q. For running Scotland as a whole, would you like to see :-

	<u>July</u> 1978	<u>March</u> 1979	<u>Nov</u> 1980	<u>May</u> 1981	<u>Sept</u> 1981
	%	%	%	%	%
A completely independent Scottish Assembly separate from England	15	14	19	25	23
A Scottish Assembly as part of Britain but with substantial powers	48	42	44	50	46
No change from the present system	32	35	29	25	31
Don't know	4	9	9	-	-

(b) O.R.C. (T.V. Eye 1st October 1981)

An O.R.C. survey carried out on 30th September 1981 and conducted in the TV Eye Programme on 1st October looked at attitudes to the parties. Using a prompted voting intention, O.R.C. found 36% claiming they would vote Labour, 30% Conservative, 29% Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance and 5% for other parties.

(c) M.O.R.I. (Daily Star 30th September 1981)

An M.O.R.I. poll published in the Daily Start on September 30th 1981 included a number of questions on support for the political parties. Unfortunately the Daily Star article does not provide information on when the interviewing for the survey was conducted.

M.O.R.I. found that 42% of respondents claimed they would vote Labour, 28% Conservative, 17% SDP, 11% Liberal and 2% for 'other' parties.

When asked how they would vote if they could vote for a Liberal-Social Democrat candidate 44% claimed they would vote for such a candidate, 31% Labour, 22% Conservative and 3% for 'other' parties.