

CONFIDENTIAL

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Conservative Research Department

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KB/SEN

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr. Ian Gow M.P.,  
10 Downing Street,  
London SW1.

11th March 1980

Dear Ian,

Public Opinion Background Note No.6

I enclose a copy of my standard background note on the results from our latest Gallup tracking study.



D.K. Britto.

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Public Opinion Background Note 6  
(Produced 9th March 1980)

1. Introduction

This note is based on the results from our latest Gallup "tracking" study. The actual interviewing on which it was based was completed by Gallup on Monday March 3rd. The tracking study exercise is designed to provide information on trends in support for various parties among the electorate as a whole and in sub-groups of political interest. Each individual weekly survey involves interviews with approximately 1,000 electors throughout Great Britain and provides a reasonably reliable picture of support for the main parties in a particular week - the results Gallup publish in the Daily Telegraph are based on the results from one of these surveys. As a Party we should be concerned not with an absolute measure of our support and that for the other parties - opinion research techniques with the errors inherent in the approach cannot produce such precise measures - but with the trends in support over a period.

2. Voting Intention

The results from our latest weekly tracking study completed last Monday (3rd March) show a continuation of a tendency to a downward movement in the level of support for the Conservative Party that has been going on since the end of January. The individual downward movements in support are not significant in opinion research terms but the trend is. The fall in Conservative support has been matched by an upward trend in support for Labour. The result of these movements has been a Labour lead of 11 per cent. It must always be remembered that these findings are based on the results of the hypothetical question "If there was a General Election tomorrow how would you vote?" and that at this stage in the Parliamentary cycle when as a Government we are being forced to take many unpopular decisions, it is not surprising that some of our support has fallen away. National support for the Liberals has been fluctuating in recent weeks and shows no clear trend - although it has fallen since the 'peak' in support reached just before Christmas.

Voting Intention

	<u>CON</u> %	<u>LAB</u> %	<u>LIB</u> %	<u>OTHER</u> %	<u>LEAD</u> %
May 1979 (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	5.5	+7.0
13-18 June*	42	43½	12	2½	-1½
<u>1980</u>					
9-14 Jan	36	45	16	3	-9
17-22 Jan	38	42	17	3	-4
23-28 Jan	40	39½	18	2½	+½
30-4th Feb	37	45	16	2	-8
6-11th Feb	37½	42	18	2½	-4½
13-18 Feb	40	43	15	2	-3
20-25 Feb	38	47	13	2	-9
27-3rd March	36	47	14½	2½	-11

\* First Gallup post-Election survey

3. Government Record

The electorate's support for the Government reached the lowest level we have seen since the Election - only 28% of the electorate claimed to approve of the Government's record. Again, as with voting intention, given the unpopular nature of some of the necessary measures we are having to take, this should not cause too much concern.

Government Record

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
13th-18th June*	34	41	25
<u>1980</u>			
9-14 Jan	33	53	14
17-22 Jan	32	56	12
23-28 Jan	35	52	13
30-4th Feb	29	58	13
6-11 Feb	30	55	15
13-18 Feb	31	58	11
20-25 Feb	30	57	14
27-3rd March	28	58	14

\* First post-election Gallup survey.

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs. Thatcher's personal popularity dropped again in our latest tracking study in line with our other tracking measures. Callaghan's popularity increased slightly but he is still far short of the peak he reached in July last year. Popularity of Steel, as with popularity of Liberals, has tended to fluctuate in recent weeks but has tended to decline.

Popularity of Political Leaders

	<u>Mrs. Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr. Callaghan</u>			<u>Mr. Steel</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissat.</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
9-14 Jan	39	54	7	53	35	12	62	19	19
17-22 Jan	38	55	6	47	41	12	58	17	25
23-28 Jan	42	52	6	49	39	12	62	18	20
30-4 Feb	37	56	7	50	38	13	57	19	23
6-11 Feb	37	55	9	50	36	14	60	18	22
13-18 Feb	41	53	5	49	40	11	62	15	21
20-25 Feb	39	54	7	50	37	13	58	18	24
27-3 Mar	37	56	7	53	33	14	57	18	25

5. Communication

The majority of the electorate (55%) claimed in the period 27th February - 3rd March not to have seen or heard anything making them more or less favourably inclined towards the Government - 14% claimed to have heard or seen something making them more favourably inclined towards the Government and 31% something tending to make them less favourably inclined. Items mentioned as making electors more favourably inclined towards the Government included - relations with the Unions (5%), handling of steel strike (3%), Mrs. Thatcher (4%) and the Panorama programme (2%). On the less favourable side we found the following main items mentioned; Public spending cuts (7%), cost of living (6%), Mrs. Thatcher (5%), handling of the steel strike (4%), international affairs (3%), relations with Unions (3%) and policies in general (3%).

When we asked people where they had heard or seen these items making them more or less favourably inclined towards the Government we found:- (See overleaf)

	<u>More Favourably inclined heard or seen</u>	<u>Less Favourably inclined heard or seen</u>
	%	%
TV News	70	63
TV Current Affairs Programme	27	17
Newspaper	37	44
Radio	15	12

(Multiple answers possible so percentages add to more than 100).

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