

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 103

(produced 6th March 1982)

1. Introduction

The latest Gallup tracking study conducted from 24th February to 1st March found a sharp increase in Conservative support, a very slight drop in Labour support, almost no change in Social Democrat support and a sharp fall in Liberal support. We will need to await the results of further surveys before attempting to draw any major conclusions with regard to the upward trend in support for the Conservative Party.

The latest study found 32.5% claiming they would vote Labour (33½% 17/22 Feb), 31% Conservative (26½% 17/22 Feb), 22½% Social Democrat (22% 17/22 Feb) and 11% Liberal (14% 17/22 Feb). The combined level of Social Democrat and Liberal support is down from 36% (17/22 Feb) to 33½% in the latest study - these figures compared with 51½% in the week 2/7 December. Please see table on following page for details.

VOTING INTENTION

(unprompted question, 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>LIBERAL & SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>							
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	+7.0	13.8
13/16 June*	42.0	43.5	13.0	-	5.0	-9.0	13.0
<u>1981</u>							
3/8 June	31.0	40.0	14.0	12.5	2.5	-9.0	26.5
9/15 June	29.5	37.5	18.0	12.5	2.5	-8.0**	30.5
16/22 June	32.0	37.0	15.5	13.0	2.5	-5.0	28.5
24/30 June	29.0	40.0	17.0	12.0	2.0	-11.0	29.0
1/6 July	30.5	39.5	14.0	13.0	3.0	-9.0	27.0
8/13 July	30.0	40.5	14.5	12.0	3.0	-10.5**	26.5
15/20 July	29.0	36.0	16.0	17.0	2.0	-7.0	33.0
22/27 July	26.0	38.0	13.0	21.0	2.0	-12.0	34.0
29 July/3 Aug	25.5	40.0	11.5	20.5	2.5	-14.5	32.0
5/10 Aug	27.0	36.0	15.0	19.0	4.0	-9.0	33.0
12/17 Aug	28.0	38.5	13.0	19.0	1.5	-10.5**	32.0
19/24 Aug	29.0	34.0	17.0	18.0	2.0	-5.0	35.0
26/31 Aug	26.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	2.0	-15.0	31.0
1/7 Sept	25.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	3.0	-16.0	31.0
9/14 Sept	32.0	36.5	11.5	17.5	2.5	-4.5**	29.0
16/21 Sept	25.0	36.5	16.0	19.0	3.5	-11.5	35.0
23/28 Sept	24.5	33.5	16.5	24.0	1.5	-9.0	40.5
30 Sept/5 Oct	26.0	38.0	12.0	21.0	3.0	-12.0	33.0
7/12 Oct	27.0	31.0	12.5	26.5	3.0	-4.0	39.0
14/19 Oct	28.5	34.0	12.5	22.0	3.0	-5.5	34.5
21/25 Oct	29.5	28.0	13.5	26.5	2.5	+1.5**	40.0
28 Oct/2 Nov	26.5	29.0	13.0	29.5	2.5	-2.5	42.5
4/9 Nov	26.5	28.5	14.5	28.5	2.0	-2.0	43.0
11/16 Nov	26.5	29.0	15.0	27.0	2.5	-2.5**	42.0
18/23 Nov	25.5	26.0	14.0	32.0	2.5	-0.5	46.0
25/30 Nov	25.0	26.5	15.5	30.0	3.0	-1.5	45.5
2/7 Dec	26.0	21.0	13.5	38.0	1.5	+5.0	51.5
9/14 Dec	23.0	23.5	14.5	36.0	3.0	-0.5**	50.5
<u>1982</u>							
6/11 Jan	25.5	30.0	17.0	25.0	2.5	-4.5	42.0
13/18 Jan	27.5	29.5	13.0	26.5	3.5	-2.5**	39.5
20/25 Jan	30.0	27.0	14.0	26.5	2.5	+3.0	40.5
27 Jan/1 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	24.0	3.0	0.0	39.0
3/8 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	26.0	1.0	0.0	41.0
10/15 Feb	27.5	34.0	14.5	21.5	2.5	-6.5**	35.0
17/22 Feb	26.5	33.5	14.0	22.0	4.0	-7.0	36.0
24 Feb/1 March	31.0	32.5	11.0	22.5	3.0	-1.5	33.5

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published polls

2. Government Record

The latest study found almost no change in the level of approval for the record of the Government - 23% approved (22% 17/22 Feb) and 63% disapproved (66% 17/22 Feb). Details are shown below

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>			
1/7 September	23	65	13
9/14 September	26	63	11
16/21 September	21	67	11
23/28 September	21	66	13
30 Sept/ 5 Oct	21	70	10
7/12 October	20	68	12
14/19 October	24	65	12
21/26 October	24	62	13
28 October/ 2 November	23	66	10
4/9 November	27	64	9
11/16 November	23	66	11
18/23 November	22	66	12
25/30 November	22	65	14
2/7 December	20	69	11
9/14 December	18	70	12
<u>1982</u>			
6/11 January	23	65	12
13/18 January	24	65	12
20/25 January	26	62	13
27 Jan/1 Feb	25	62	13
3/8 Feb	26	63	11
10/15 Feb	24	66	10
17/22 Feb	22	66	13
24 Feb/ 1 March	23	63	13

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest study found a slight improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity, almost no change in Mr Foot's popularity and a slight fall in Mr Steel's popularity. Details are shown below.

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.	sat.	Know		Not	Know		Not	Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1981</u>									
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
30 Sept/ 5 Oct	27	68	6	31	49	20	60	20	20
7/12 Oct	26	68	6	28	50	22	62	19	18
14/19 Oct	31	62	7	31	50	20	64	15	21
21/26 Oct	33	62	5	27	54	19	64	20	16
28 Oct/ 2 Nov	29	65	6	25	59	16	64	19	17
4/9 Nov	32	64	3	24	62	14	68	16	16
11/16 Nov	28	66	6	16	67	17	64	17	19
18/23 Nov	29	66	5	18	68	15	69	15	16
25/30 Nov	29	65	5	18	68	15	67	15	18
2/7 Dec	29	66	5	18	68	14	64	18	18
9/14 Dec	25	70	5	19	67	14	63	18	19
<u>1982</u>									
6/11 January	30	65	5	20	65	14	62	20	18
13/18 January	32	65	4	18	67	16	59	22	19
20/25 January	32	64	4	17	68	15	59	22	19
27 Jan/1 Feb	33	62	5	19	64	17	60	18	22
3/8 Feb	31	65	4	20	63	17	61	20	19
10/15 Feb	29	66	5	19	66	15	59	23	17
17/22 Feb	29	65	5	20	64	16	58	20	21
24 Feb/1st March	32	63	5	21	64	15	55	23	22

4. Published Polls(a) MORI (Daily Star 3rd March 1982)

An MORI poll published in the Daily Star on 3rd March found 30% claiming they would vote Conservative, 33% Labour, 12% Liberal, 11% SDP, 11% Alliance and 3% for 'other parties'. The poll was conducted from 18th to 22nd February.

(b) NOP (Daily Mail 4th March 1982)

An NOP poll conducted on 3rd March and published in the Daily Mail on 4th March asked respondents "Do you approve or disapprove of the cricketers' action (in going to South Africa) or are you not concerned about it?" 47% approved, 21% disapproved, 29% were not concerned and 3% did not answer. NOP also asked "Do sporting links with South Africa help support the apartheid system, or do they help black South Africans?" 19% thought sporting links help support apartheid, 47% sporting links help blacks and 34% did not know. When asked about taking disciplinary action against the cricketers who went to South Africa, NOP found 74% believed they should not be banned from playing in an English Test team again.

(c) MORI (Scotsman 3rd and 4th March 1982)

The Scotsman on 3rd and 4th March included details of an MORI poll conducted in Scotland only between 16th and 24th February. Details of the voting intention trend are shown below:-

	<u>May 1979</u> General Election	<u>May</u> 1981	<u>Nov</u> 1981	<u>Feb</u> 1982
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	31.4	23	17	18
Labour	41.5	42	36	39
Lib/SDP	9.0 (Liberal)	20	34	29
SNP	17.3	15	13	14
Other	0.8	0	0	*

MORI also asked about the attitudes to the image of the parties - details are shown below:-

Party Images

(what voters think of the main political parties)

	<u>LAB</u> %	<u>CON</u> %	<u>SNP</u> %	<u>LIB</u> %	<u>SDP</u> %
Reliable	9	6	6	9	4
Keeps its promises	6	6	30	5	2
Understands problems facing Scotland	11	5	40	13	7
Represents all classes	19	6	15	24	20
Says different things to different people	15	28	8	4	8
Moderate	9	8	8	29	17
Extreme	14	15	11	6	2
Supports Scottish interests	8	3	47	14	7
Has good leaders	11	13	7	28	18
Declining	28	20	17	6	12
Out of touch with ordinary people	13	53	17	4	4
Divided	45	13	10	7	12

MORI asked respondents "Who would make the best Scottish Secretary" - 18% selected George Younger, 26% Bruce Millar, 15% Russell Johnston and 41% did not have a view

(d) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 8th March 1982)

The Daily Telegraph on 8th March included details of a series of Gallup polls conducted in five European countries and the USA last month. The polls looked at attitudes to the presence of U.S. troops and weapons in Europe and attitudes to US leadership of the Western Alliance. Gallup asked "In general, how much confidence do you have in the United States to deal wisely with world problems - a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all. They found:-

	<u>Britain</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>West Germany</u>	<u>Italy</u>	<u>Belgium</u>	<u>Switzerland</u>	<u>Denmark</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	6	4	16	17	7	4	5
A fair amount	29	36	41	36	38	29	33
Not very much	39	35	33	18	20	51	30
None at all	21	12	7	11	10	12	18
Don't know	5	13	2	18	25	4	14

60% of respondents in Great Britain claimed to have 'not very much', or 'no confidence at all' in the United States leadership - in France 47% gave the same replies, in West Germany 40%, in Italy 29%, in Belgium 30%, in Switzerland 63% and in Denmark 48%. 35% of the British electorate claimed to have a 'great deal' or 'a fair amount' of confidence in US leadership - 40% gave this answer in France, 57% in West Germany, 53% in Italy, 45% in Belgium, 33% in Switzerland and 38% in Denmark.

When asked about attitudes to U.S. nuclear weapons and U.S. troops in Europe, Gallup found 42% of the British electorate thought the presence of U.S. nuclear missiles increased chances of attack, 29% they provide greater protection and 24% their presence has no effect. When asked about the presence of U.S. troops 25% thought their presence increases chances of attack, 24% provides greater protection, and 46% has no effect.

Details of the results together with comparative figures for other European countries and the U.S.A. are shown below:-

	<u>G.B.</u>	<u>West Germany</u>	<u>Belgium</u>	<u>Denmark</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>U.S.A.</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>Presence of U.S. Nuclear Missiles</u>						
Increases chances of attack	42	27	24	21	24	14
Provides greater protection	29	41	25	29	31	55
No effect	24	28	21	24	23	19
Don't know	5	3	30	26	22	12
<u>Presence of U.S. Troops</u>						
Increases chances of attack	25	15	22	16	-	10
Provides greater protection	24	48	25	33	-	61
No effect	46	33	27	26	-	19
Don't know	5	3	27	25	-	10

When asked whether they thought it would be better to fight than accept Russian domination - in Britain 12% thought we should accept domination and 75% thought we should fight.

Gallup found that in the event of an attack on Western Europe that many electors have doubts about NATO's defence capabilities. In G.B. 56% claimed to have 'a greater deal' or a 'fair amount' of confidence in NATO.

Details are shown below:-

	<u>Confidence in NATO</u>						
	<u>G.B.</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>West Germany</u>	<u>Italy</u>	<u>Belgium</u>	<u>Switzerland</u>	<u>Denmark</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	12	5	16	16	7	4	15
A fair amount	44	34	45	33	36	27	38
Not very much	25	29	29	19	24	46	22
None at all	10	9	6	9	9	12	9
Don't know	8	23	4	23	24	11	16

(e) MORI (Observer 7th March 1982)

The results of an MORI poll conducted between 18th and 22nd February for the campaign for Lead-free Air found 91% of the electorate claiming they believed lead in petrol was a potential health hazard. 89% claimed they thought lead in petrol should be banned. When asked "Do you think the Government should introduce a law to ensure that all petrol sold in Britain is lead-free, even if this would put up petrol prices by a few pence per gallon-" - 77% said 'yes' 15% 'no' and 8% did not give an answer.

(f) Systems Three (Glasgow Herald 9th March 1982)

A Systems Three poll conducted in Glasgow Hillhead on 6/7 March found 32% claiming they will vote Labour, 31% Conservative, 25% Alliance and 11% SNP - after don't knows had been eliminated. They found 30% of respondents claiming they did not know how they would vote - an extremely high figure, even for a by-election poll.