



## Conservative Central Office

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### Public Opinion Background

Three background notes on the state of public opinion are enclosed:-

- (a) a report on our fourth 'State of Battle' survey conducted on 3/4 June.
- (b) a review of published opinion polls.
- (c) a copy of the weekly review of our 'Fast FeedBack' operation.

D. K. BRITTO

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STATE OF THE BATTLE SURVEY : 4.

Sample size : 2073

Fieldwork Dates : June 3rd. & 4th 1983.

London Paris New York Washington DC.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS.

1. The Conservative share of the vote holds steady at 45% while Labour's share has declined from 32% to 28% and the Alliance share has risen from 20% to 24%.
2. In the regions the Conservative share of the vote has risen significantly in the East Midlands and the South East.  
In most regions the Alliance share of the vote has risen at the expense of Labour.  
Only in Greater London is there a sign of the Conservative vote falling (9%) and the alliance vote rising (9%)  
Even so the Conservatives are still in a slightly better position relative to Labour than they were in 1979.
3. 90% of Conservatives, 85% of Labour voters and 52% of Alliance supporters claim to have made up their mind how to vote before the Campaign began. Just over one in five of alliance voters claims to have made up their mind in the last week.
4. Only 1% of Conservatives, 2% of Labour, and 4% of Alliance voters think it very likely that they might change their mind about how they vote between now and Thursday.
5. While the potential for additional Alliance support exists, it now seems unlikely that this could emerge to a degree which will harm the Conservatives over a four day period.
6. The standing of the Conservatives on the N.H.S., Education and unemployment has increased gradually but significantly over the period of the Campaign.

7. The Conservatives have a commanding lead on their perceived ability to deal with :

Rising prices

Law and Order

Controlling Trade Unions

Dealing with the EEC

Defence

The Labour and Conservative Parties are level on Unemployment and the Labour Party is marginally ahead on Pensions.

The rating of the Alliance has improved by 3% or 4% on most issues, in line with their overall improvement.

8. There has been over the last week a dramatic increase in the number of voters thinking that the Labour Party is the 'party which has been running an unfair campaign'.
9. The Conservatives are widely thought of as the Party offering the 'best long term hopes for the future prosperity of Britain!'

### 1.1. Voting Intention: National

The Conservative share of the vote, currently at 45% has not changed significantly throughout the campaign.

This week the Labour share of the vote has declined by 4% to 28%, while that of the Alliance has risen to 24% from 20%.

(Table 1)

### 1.2 Voting Intention: Regional

Please note that these figures quoted appear low because don't knows are taken into account.

North: The Labour vote and the don't knows have both decreased to show the Alliance improving to 22% from 15%. The Conservative vote at 31% has stayed within 1% of its current level for the last 3 weeks.

Yorkshire and Humberside: No significant change since last week - the Conservative lead here is 15% compared with 17% last week.

East Midlands: The Alliance improvement last week has not been maintained. The Labour vote has dropped from 28% to 22% and the Alliance from 22% to 19%, while the Conservatives have improved from 40% to 47%.

East Anglia: The Labour vote and Don't know's have dropped in equal proportions and have benefitted the Conservatives and Alliance equally. Currently the Conservative vote is 44%, the Alliance 24% and Labour 19%.

South East: The slight Alliance improvement noted last week has not been maintained leaving the Conservatives with a commanding 36% lead over the Alliance in this region.

Greater London: Is the only region where the Alliance seems to have improved their position (up 9%) largely at the expense of the Conservatives (down 7%). The Conservatives still have a marginal lead over Labour with the Alliance in third place.

South West: The Conservative vote holds steady at 48% with Labour down to 13% and the Alliance up from 21% to 30%.

West Midlands: The Conservative vote holds steady at 41% while Labour declines from 31% to 24% and the Alliance improves from 15% to 26%.

North West: The Conservative vote is again static at 35% while Labour is down 6% to 33% and the Alliance up from 14% to 20%.

Scotland: The Conservative vote has been maintained at a steady level while the Alliance and Nationalists have improved at the expense of Labour and don't know.

Wales: The Conservative position is not significantly different from the beginning of the campaign where there is a slight lead over Labour with the Alliance firmly in third place.

(Table 2)

### 1.3 Strength of Loyalty

The Conservative vote and what is left of the Labour vote shows no sign of weakening, while the increased Alliance vote is weaker than their smaller share a week ago.

(Table 3)

Table 1. VOTING INTENTION

National figures - Don't knows excluded.

	3/4 June %	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
Conservative	45	46	46	48	44
Labour	28	32	34	34	34
Liberal/SDP Alliance	24	20	19	16	20
Other	2	2	1	2	2

Table 2. REGIONAL VOTING INTENTION

(Dont knows/Refused Included)

	3/4 June %	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
<u>NORTH</u>					
Conservative	31	32	30	32	27
Labour	42	45	46	44	50
Alliance	22	15	13	14	10
Other	-	1	-	2	2
Dont know/Refused	5	7	10	8	12
<u>YORKSHIRE</u>					
Conservative	45	46	39	44	45
Labour	30	29	39	39	29
Alliance	18	16	15	12	22
Other	1	1	-	1	-
Dont know/Refused	5	8	7	5	4
<u>EAST MIDLANDS</u>					
Conservative	47	40	49	48	39
Labour	22	28	27	28	41
Alliance	19	22	16	18	15
Other	2	1	1	-	-
Dont know/Refused	10	8	6	6	5
<u>EAST ANGLIA</u>					
Conservative	44	40	49	51	53
Labour	19	23	23	26	17
Alliance	24	19	17	12	22
Other	1	-	-	1	-
Don't know/Refused	12	18	11	10	8

Table 2 Continued

Field Work Dates.	3/4 June %	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
<u>SOUTH EAST</u>					
Conservative	56	53	47	53	53
Labour	17	17	24	19	21
Alliance	20	25	22	18	20
Other	1	1	-	1	-
Dont know/Refused	7	5	7	9	6
<u>GREATER LONDON</u>					
Conservative	35	42	39	42	41
Labour	33	32	34	34	37
Alliance	27	18	19	13	15
Other	1	1	-	1	1
Dont know/Refused	2	7	7	10	6
<u>SOUTH WEST</u>					
Conservative	48	49	54	43	49
Labour	13	18	16	17	23
Alliance	30	21	21	25	24
Other	1	1	-	-	-
Dont know/Refused	8	11	9	15	4
<u>WEST MIDLANDS</u>					
Conservative	41	42	45	47	44
Labour	24	31	29	31	30
Alliance	26	15	16	12	21
Other	1	1	-	1	-
Dont know/Refused	8	12	10	9	5

Table 2 Continued

Field Date Works.	3/4 June %	27/28 May %	20/21 May %	13/14 May %	6/7 May %
<u>NORTH WEST</u>					
Conservative	35	35	38	36	37
Labour	33	39	40	42	40
Alliance	20	14	11	11	18
Other	*	-	-	-	-
Dont know/Refused	12	11	11	10	6
<u>SCOTLAND</u>					
Conservative	30	28	33	42	26
Labour	30	36	35	33	38
Alliance	19	14	17	12	20
Other	13	9	7	6	11
Dont know/Refused	8	14	8	7	5
<u>WALES</u>					
Conservative	39	35	37	38	40
Labour	35	35	37	33	32
Alliance	20	24	16	19	18
Other	1	1	1	3	7
Dont know/Refused	5	6	10	8	3

TABLE 3      STRENGTH OF LOYALTY

<u>May/June</u> <u>Fieldwork</u>	<u>CONSERVATIVE</u>				<u>LABOUR</u>				<u>ALLIANCE</u>			
	3/4 June	27/28 May	20/21 May	6/7 May	3/4 June	27/28 May	20/21 May	6/7 May	3/4 June	27/28 May	20/21 May	6/7 May
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very strongly	54	51	47	42	51	48	48	51	25	32	23	25
Fairly strongly	30	34	33	41	31	33	31	33	43	42	47	49
Not very strongly	15	15	17	17	17	16	19	15	30	25	27	27
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	-

## Potential for Tactical Voting

2.1 90% of Conservative voters had made up their minds how to vote before the Election as had 85% of Labour and 52% of Alliance. There is evidence of some 3% of the electorate overall deciding to vote Alliance over the last week.

	Voting Intention		
	Conservative	Labour	Alliance
Decided how to vote:	%	%	%
In last day or two:	1	2	8
During last week:	2	4	14
Before last weekend) ) but during Campaign)	3	4	19
Before Campaign:	90	85	52
Don't Know:	3	5	7

2.2 When voters who had already named a party preference were asked how likely it was that they might change their vote:

1% of Conservatives said very likely and 4% fairly likely.

2% of Labour voters said very likely and 6% fairly likely.

4% of Alliance voters said very likely and 8% fairly likely.

The Alliance voters who might change would go equally to Conservative and Labour, while those Conservative and Labour voters who might change opted overwhelmingly for the Alliance.

2.3 There remains however a potential for switching in that almost 1 in 3 Labour voters would be prepared to vote for another party if they thought this might stop the Conservatives winning.

2.4 The potential for improvement in the Alliance position remains, and indeed has increased slightly over the last week. There are still about 1 in 5 Conservatives and 1 in 3 Labour voters who would vote for the Alliance if they thought they would either win a majority or hold a balance of power. Only 5% of Conservatives and 9% of Labour voters think that they might be likely to vote for the Alliance if they were only to win a few seats.

Given the overwhelming nature of the predictions of the Media this weekend the likelihood of significant Alliance improvement must be limited.

3. Election Debating propositions:

3.1 At the beginning of the Campaign 51% of the Electorate blamed Government policies for unemployment and 41% disagreed. In the course of the Campaign the Conservative position has gradually improved so that now 45% agree that Government policies are to blame and 44% disagree.

3.2 Fewer than 1 voter in 4 now believes that Labour defence policies will win more support than Conservative defence policies.

3.3 That Conservative policies have damaged the health and education services is still credible to a few more voters than disagree with the propositions though there has been a remarkable improvement in the course of the campaign. On the NHS a Conservative deficit of 23% has become a deficit of 4% and on Education a deficit of 22% has become a deficit of 1%.

ELECTION DEBATING PROPOSITIONS : SUMMARY TABLES

'The current level of unemployment is largely due to the present Conservative Government's policies.'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	51	40
13/14 May	46	41
20/21 May	48	40
27/28 May	47	41
3/4 June	45	44

'Labour's policies on nuclear disarmament are likely to win more support than Conservative policies.'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	30	53
13/14 May	30	53
20/21 May	32	53
27/28 May	26	60
3/4 June	26	61

'The policies of the Conservative Government since they were elected have severely damaged the National Health Service'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	52	29
13/14 May	46	38
20/21 May	49	37
27/28 May	47	37
3/4 June	45	41

'The policies of the Conservative Government since they were elected have severely damaged the education service provided for most children.'

	% agree	% disagree
6/7 May	53	31
13/14 May	46	38
20/21 May	46	39
27/28 May	44	39
3/4 June	43	42

4. Effectiveness of Parties at dealing with Problems

The Conservatives have maintained a static position throughout the Campaign and have a commanding lead as the Party thought best at dealing with:

Rising Prices

Law and Order

Controlling Trade Unions

Dealing with the Common Market

Defence of the Country

The only item on which Labour has a clear advantage is Old people.

The two parties are level on unemployment.

SUMMARY TABLE : PARTY THOUGHT BEST AT DEALING WITH :

	CONS	LAB	ALLIANCE	OTHER/DONT KNOW
<u>UNEMPLOYMENT</u>				
13/14 May	29	39	10	22
20/21 May	28	40	10	20
27/28 May	31	36	13	20
3/4 June	32	32	17	20
<u>RISING PRICES</u>				
13/14 May	47	26	8	19
20/21 May	48	26	8	17
27/28 May	50	25	9	15
3/4 June	49	23	12	16
<u>LAW AND ORDER</u>				
13/14 May	52	19	7	22
20/21 May	51	20	7	21
27/28 May	54	20	8	19
3/4 June	54	17	11	18
<u>CONTROLLING TRADE UNIONS</u>				
13/14 May	54	30	5	12
20/21 May	56	28	6	11
27/28 May	54	28	6	13
3/4 June	56	25	8	12
<u>DEALING WITH THE COMMON MARKET</u>				
13/14 May	54	23	7	16
20/21 May	53	25	8	14
27/28 May	55	24	9	13
3/4 June	56	21	12	11
<u>DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY</u>				
13/14 May	60	18	5	17
20/21 May	61	21	7	11
27/28 May	63	19	8	11
3/4 June	62	19	10	9
<u>HELPING OLD AGE PENSIONERS</u>				
13/14 May	*	*	*	*
20/21 May	26	47	8	18
27/28 May	30	45	11	15
3/4 June	31	44	12	13

(\* not asked in that week)

## 5. Specific Policy Issues

### Blame for Unemployment

Only 3 items were selected from the list by more than 5% of voters, as was the case last week. There has been no significant change in the blame currently attached

- (a) to World Economic Conditions - now 37%
- (b) to the Conservative Government - now 27%
- (c) to the Trade Unions - now 18%

### The Falklands War

56% of all voters, including 87% of Conservatives, 19% of Labour and 48% of Alliance supporters believe that Mrs. Thatcher's conduct of the Falklands War has made them more likely to vote Conservative, while only 34% - mostly Labour and Alliance supporters say this has made them less likely to do so.

## 6. The Election Campaign and the Parties

6.1 Expectation of a Conservative win is very high - 96% of Conservatives, 90% of Alliance and 72% of Labour voters think this is likely.

6.2 There has been a dramatic increase in the % of electors thinking Labour is running an unfair campaign - from 24% last week to 47% this week. All field work was after the Healey outburst. 2% fewer (22%) thought the Conservatives were running an unfair campaign.

(Table 4)

6.3 There is still a widespread belief (which could be potentially dangerous) that the Alliance doing well would damage Labour more (54% of Conservative voters) than the Conservatives (27% of Conservative voters).

6.4 70% of all voters and 80% of Conservatives believe it likely that the Conservatives will have a very big majority in the next Parliament and 49% of all voters including 18% of Conservatives believe that this would be bad for Britain.

In spite of this the Observer Poll (published 5th June) indicates that this belief is likely to have a minimal impact on voting behaviour.

TABLE 4 UNFAIR CAMPAIGNING

	ALL VOTERS			
	3/4 June	27/28 May	20/21 May	19 May
Party thought to be unfair	%	%	%	%
Conservative	22	24	22	21
Labour	47	24	24	18
Alliance	13	10	7	7
Other	3	2	1	4
Don't know/none	43	61	63	65

## 7. The Next Government

7.1 47% of voters believe that a new Conservative Government would not damage the level of Health Care provided by the NHS, 44% believe they would do so.

7.2 By an overwhelming margin which correlates closely with voting intention, the Conservatives are thought to offer the best longterm prospects for Britain's prosperity (48%). 23% think Labour offers this, 18% Alliance and 10% Don't Know.