



File

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17th July 1985

Stephen Sherbourne, Esq.,
10 Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

Dear Steve,

As promised, I attach a detailed note on the result of the Brecon and Radnor by-election - the note attempts to put the defeat into the context of other by-election defeats of Governments of both political colours. It does not attempt any detailed analysis of why we lost Brecon - but in the context of this, the attached cutting from the Daily Telegraph (11th July, 1985) might be of interest.

Looking at national public opinion, we have just received the results of our latest Gallup 'tracking' study conducted largely after the by-election. I will be presenting the results of this poll in Public Opinion Background Note 96, but it is perhaps worth looking at them in the context of my note on the by-election. Gallup in this unpublished poll found Labour with 36½%, the 'Alliance' with 31%, the Conservatives with 30½% and 'other' parties with 2%. Although we must be careful not to place too much emphasis on the results of a single poll, this latest survey does not show any sharp upward trend in Alliance support - indeed, their current level is short of the peak of 33½% they reached in May and June. Having said this, it is clear from the trend of polls this year (details in table attached) that in terms of national voting, we have all three parties with very similar shares of the popular vote. The party in the lead and the order of parties has varied, as has the level of support by small (in many cases, by statistically insignificant) amounts in both published and unpublished polls.

Yours
D.K. Britto

D.K. Britto
Deputy Director
Press and Communications

THE BRECON AND RADNOR BY-ELECTION IN CONTEXT

1. By-Election Gains and Losses 1959-1985

The Brecon and Radnor by-election is the eighth by-election in the Parliament (in Great Britain) and only the second in which we have had a change in the Party holding the seat. Apart from Portsmouth South (SDP gain from the Conservatives) and Brecon and Radnor (Liberal gain from Conservatives) the Conservatives have successfully defended four seats (Penrith and the Border, Stafford, Surrey SW and Southgate) and Labour have successfully defended two (Chesterfield, Cynon Valley).

The current situation can be compared with previous governments of both parties. Under the 1979 to 1983 Conservative Government, we had 17 by-elections in Great Britain and in six instances the by-election resulted in a change in the Party holding the seat. One of the parties in the so-called 'Alliance' gained four seats (Croydon NW, Crosby and Glasgow Hillhead from the Conservatives and Bermondsey from Labour). In addition, the Conservatives gained one seat from Labour (Mitcham and Morden) and Labour one seat from the Conservatives (Birmingham Northfield). We had a redistribution of constituency boundaries before 1983 so direct comparisons are difficult - however, in four instances, the Member returned at the by-election was not re-elected for any constituency at the 1983 General Election. The Conservatives regained Croydon NW and Crosby from the so-called 'Alliance' and Birmingham Northfield from Labour. The 'Alliance' successfully held Glasgow Hillhead and Bermondsey and the Conservatives Birmingham Northfield.

A similar pattern can be identified under previous Parliaments - this is shown in the table on the next page.

Under the 1959-1964 Conservative Government, the Liberals gained one seat from the Conservatives (Orpington) and the Conservatives one seat from Labour (Brighouse and Spenborough) and Labour five seats from the Conservatives (Middlesborough West, Dorest South, Glasgow Woodside, Luton and Rutherglen). At the 1964 General Election, the Conservatives regained Dorest South from Labour but all the other parties successfully held their by-election gains - the Liberals losing Orpington in 1970.

Under the 1964-1966 Labour Government, the Conservatives gained Leyton from Labour - regained by them in 1966 - and the Liberals Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire and Peebleshire from the Conservatives - held by them at subsequent elections.

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TABLE: BY-ELECTIONS 1959-1964

(Change of control resulting from defection of Member ignored)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>BY-ELECTION</u>	<u>PARTY HOLDING BEFORE</u>	<u>PARTY HOLDING AFTER</u>	<u>RESULT AT NEXT GENERAL ELECTION</u>
<u>1959-1964</u>				
17/3/1960	Brighouse and Spensborough	Labour	Conservative	Labour
14/3/1962	Orpington	Conservative	Liberal	Liberal(*1)
6/6/1962	Middlesborough West	Conservative	Labour	Labour(*2)
22/11/1962	Dorset South	Conservative	Labour	Conservative
22/11/1962	Glasgow Woodside	Conservative	Labour	Labour(*3)
7/11/1963	Luton	Conservative	Labour	Labour(*4)
14/5/1964	Rutherglen	Conservative	Labour	Labour(*5)
<u>1964-1966</u>				
21/1/1965	Leyton	Labour	Conservative	Labour
24/3/1965	Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire & Peeblesshire	Conservative	Liberal	Liberal(*6)
<u>1966-1970</u>				
14/7/1966	Carmarthen	Labour	PC	Labour
9/3/1967	Glasgow Pollok	Labour	Conservative	Labour
21/9/1967	Cambridge	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*7)
21/9/1967	Walthamstow West	Labour	Conservative	Labour
2/11/1967	Leicester SW	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*8)
2/11/1967	Hamilton	Labour	SNP	Labour
28/3/1968	Acton	Labour	Conservative	Labour
28/3/1968	Dudley	Labour	Conservative	Labour
28/3/1968	Meriden	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*9)
13/6/1968	Oldham West	Labour	Conservative	Labour
27/6/1968	Nelson and Colne	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*10)
27/3/1969	Walthamstow East	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*11)
26/6/1969	Birmingham Ladywood	Labour	Liberal	Labour
30/10/1969	Swindon	Labour	Conservative	Labour
4/12/1969	Wellingborough	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*12)
<u>1970-1974(Feb)</u>				
27/5/1971	Bromsgrove	Conservative	Labour	Conservative(*13)
26/10/1972	Rochdale	Labour	Liberal	Liberal(*14)
7/12/1972	Sutton and Cheam	Conservative	Liberal	Conservative(*15)
26/7/1973	Isle of Ely	Conservative	Liberal	Liberal(*16)
26/7/1973	Ripon	Conservative	Liberal	Conservative(*15)
8/11/1973	Berwick-u-Tweed	Conservative	Liberal	Liberal(*16)
8/11/1973	Glasgow Govan	Labour	SNP	Labour(*17)

Cont/...

TABLE: BY-ELECTIONS 1959-1964 cont.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>BY-ELECTION</u>	<u>PARTY HOLDING BEFORE</u>	<u>PARTY HOLDING AFTER</u>	<u>RESULT AT NEXT ELECTION</u>
<u>1970(0)-1974</u>				
26/6/1975	Woolwich West	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*18)
4/11/1976	Walsall North	Labour	Conservative	Labour
4/11/1976	Workington	Labour	Conservative	Labour
31/3/1977	B'ham Stechford	Labour	Conservative	Labour
28/4/1977	Ashfield	Labour	Conservative	Labour
2/3/1978	Ilford North	Labour	Conservative	Conservative(*18)
29/3/1978	Liverpool Edge Hill	Labour	Liberal	Liberal(*19)
<u>1979-1983</u>				
22/10/1981	Croydon NW	Conservative	Liberal/SDP	Conservative
26/11/1981	Crosby	Conservative	Liberal/SDP	Conservative
25/3/1982	Glasgow Hillhead	Conservative	Liberal/SDP	Liberal/SDP
3/6/1982	Mitcham and Morden	Labour	Conservative	Conservative
28/10/1982	Birmingham Northfield	Conservative	Labour	Conservative
24/2/1983	Bermondsey	Labour	Liberal	Liberal(*21)
<u>1983-</u>				
14/6/1984	Portsmouth South	Conservative	SDP/Liberal	-
4/7/1985	Brecon and Radnor	Conservative	Liberal/SDP	-

NOTES

1. Orpington regained by Conservatives in 1970.
2. Middlesborough West regained by Conservatives in 1970.
3. Glasgow Woodside held by Labour until seat abolished before 1974 (Feb) election.
4. Luton regained by Conservatives at 1970.
5. Rutherglen held by Labour until seat abolished before 1974 (Feb) election.
6. Seat has been held by Liberals ever since by-election.
7. Seat has been held by Conservatives ever since by-election
8. Held by Conservatives until abolished before 1974(Feb) General Election.
9. Held by Conservatives until abolished before 1974 (Feb) General Election.
10. With the exception of 1970-1974 (Feb) seat has been held by Conservatives since by-election.
11. Held by Conservatives until seat abolished before 1974 (F) General Election.
12. Held by Conservatives since by-election.
13. Boundaries changed pre-1974 (F). Conservatives won Bromsgrove and Redditch in 1974 (F).
14. Has been held by Liberals since by-election.
15. Seat of same name regained by Conservatives in 1974 (F).
16. Seat (and successor seat) held by Liberals since by-election.
17. Seat of same name regained by Labour in 1974 (F).
18. Both seats held by Conservatives since by-election.
19. Seat (and successor) held by Liberals since by-election.
20. Liberals held successor seat at Southwark and Bermondsey in 1983.

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Under the 1966 to 1970 Labour Government the Conservatives gained 12 seats from Labour - only six of which we successfully defended at the 1970 General Election. The Liberals gained Birmingham Ladywood from Labour in a by-election, Plaid Cymru Carmarthen from Labour and the SNP Hamilton - in all three cases Labour regained the seat in the 1970 General Election.

Under the 1970-1974 (Feb) Conservative Government the Conservative lost four seats to the Liberals (Sutton and Cheam, Isle of Ely, Ripon and Berwick-upon-Tweed). The Liberals only successfully defended two of these seats (Isle of Ely and Berwick-upon-Tweed) in the February 1974 General Election. The SNP gained Glasgow Govan from Labour and the Labour Party Bromsgrove from the Conservatives - in both cases the Party which had held the seat regained it at the General Election. The Liberals gained Rochdale from Labour and successfully held it. It must of course be remembered that the boundaries of constituencies were redistributed before the February 1974 General Election.

Under the October 1974 to 1979 Labour Government, Labour lost six seats to the Conservatives and the Conservatives successfully held two of these gains in the 1979 General Election (Woolwich West and Ilford North). The Liberals gained Liverpool Edge Hill from Labour - which they successfully held at the General Election.

Under the 1979-1983 Conservative Government, the so-called 'Alliance' parties gained three seats from the Conservatives (Croydon NW, Crosby and Glasgow Hillhead) - they only managed to retain one (Glasgow Hillhead) at the 1983 General Election. The Liberals gained Bermondsey from Labour and held it at the 1983 General Election and the Conservatives gained Mitcham and Morden and also held it.

2. Brecon and Radnor

To state the obvious, media attention focuses on by-elections - however, parties in government have lost by-elections before (and I suspect will in future) and in many cases have regained the seat at the subsequent General Election. Having said this, it must be admitted that the Liberals have succeeded in defending a number of by-election gains at subsequent General Elections.

The result in Brecon and Radnor needs to be seen in this context and in that of the change in support for the parties in previous by-elections during the Parliament. The table below show the result in Brecon and Radnor when compared with the 1983 General Election:-

BRECON AND RADNOR BY-ELECTION

	Con	Lab	Lib/SDP	NAT	Other	Election (Turnout)	Majority
1983 General Election	18,255 (48.2)	9,471 (25.0)	9,226 (24.4)	640 (1.7)	278 (0.7)	47,277 (80.1)	8,784 (23.2)
1985 By- Election (4 July 1985)	10,631 (27.7%)	13,194 (34.4%)	13,753 (35.8%)	435 (1.1%)	399 (1.0%)	48,857 (79.2%)	559 (1.6%)
Difference G.E./By-Election	-7,624 (-20.5)	+723 (+9.4)	+4,527 (+11.4)	-205 (-0.6)	+121 (+0.3)	+1,580 (-0.9)	

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As can be seen, Conservative support fell by 20.5 percentage points, Labour support increased by 9.4 percentage points and 'Alliance' support by 11.4 percentage points.

The table below shows the Brecon and Radnor result in the context of previous by-elections in this Parliament. The table presents the results in terms of change in percentage share of votes rather than swing. Unfortunately, the simple concept of two party swing tends to break down in a situation with a significant third party vote.

By-Elections 1983-1985

<u>Date</u>	<u>By-Election</u>	<u>Change Conservative Share of Vote</u>	<u>Change Labour Share of Vote</u>	<u>Change SDP Share of Vote</u>	<u>Change Liberal Share of Vote</u>
28/7/1983	Penrith and the Border	-12.8	-5.9	-	+16.7
1/3/1984	Chesterfield	-17.2	-1.6	-	+15.2
3/5/1984	Cynon Valley	- 6.8	+2.8	- 0.7	-
3/5/1984	Stafford	-10.8	+3.7	+ 7.1	-
3/5/1984	Surrey SW	-10.4	-1.5	-	+11.3
14/6/1984	Portsmouth North	-15.7	+3.9	+12.2	-
13/12/1984	Southgate	- 8.5	-5.9	-	+12.2
4/7/1985	Brecon and Radnor	-20.5	+9.4	-	+11.4

In terms of the fall in Conservative support the result in Brecon and Radnor is the highest in any by-election this Parliament by a significant margin. It is also worth noting that the increase in share of the vote for one of the so-called 'Alliance' parties was higher in four previous by-elections. Labour's increase in their share of the vote by 9.4 percentage points was the highest in any by-election this Parliament.

The general conclusion on Brecon and the 'Alliance' must be that it was a good result for them - however, much will depend upon what happens to the trend of support for them now, for it is worth remembering that by the end of 1981 52% of the electorate claimed they would vote for one of the 'Alliance' parties - they won Glasgow Hillhead in early 1982 but only gained 25.3% of the vote in the 1983 General Election.

Gallup Poll

16pc in Brecon made up minds in last few days

ONE in six of the electors in Brecon and Radnor made up their minds about how to vote in the last few days of the by-election campaign, according to a special Gallup Poll conducted exclusively for THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

This proportion, 16 per cent. of the electorate, compares with the 1½ per cent. by which the Alliance won the election.

One in two of the people who decided in the last few days voted for the Liberal candidate.

The following table shows when voters for the three main parties finally made up their minds on who to support:

	All voters	Con	Lab	Alliance
A long time ago	74	88	82	57
Two or three weeks ago	13	3	8	25
Last few days	12	8	9	18
Can't recall	1	1	0	0

By-elections are not general elections but in 1983 only eight per cent. of voters didn't make up their minds until the last few days of the national campaign. Included in that 17 per cent. of Alliance voters, almost as much as in Brecon and Radnor, were late decision makers.

If one looks at the share of votes among the people making up their minds in the last few days the following pattern emerges:

	All voters	Last few days
Alliance	28	53
Labour	27	26
Conservative	22	18
Other	2	3

Gallup also asked its sample to cast their minds back to about four weeks ago and to say what their voting intention was then. These replies are shown below as percentages of the electorate, together with the votes on the day:

	Polling day	4 weeks ago
Not voting	21	20
Voting:		
Alliance	28	27
Labour	27	27
Conservative	22	24
Other	2	2

The table suggests that there was little movement apart from the late deciders already mentioned. In fact it conceals a significant degree of switching over the four weeks with one in five electors voting other than they had originally intended.

Much of the movement had a cancelling out effect but the following table shows the various shifts that took place:

polling day:	Con	Lab	Alli-	Other	Not
Con.	80	1	3	0	4
Lab.	1	84	6	5	8
Alliance	9	2	80	17	10
Other	0	1	0	56	2
Did not vote	10	12	10	22	75

Thus for every 100 intending to vote Conservative four weeks before election day, 80 in fact did, 10 did not vote, an nine switched to voting for the Alliance.

Labour supporters were less volatile and the early Alliance supporters switched to the same degree as Conservatives did.

Another way of looking at the switching that took place in the constituency is to compare the share of votes with the party people generally thought of themselves supporting:

	Share of votes	Party identification
Alliance	36	22
Labour	34	37
Conservative	28	38
Other	2	3

This analysis suggests that even longer term shifts were taking place. Taking the people identifying with the Conservative party the following table shows what they had intended to do four weeks ago and what they actually did on polling day:

	Conservative 'identifiers' 4 weeks ago	Polling day
Conservative	87	59
Labour	1	2
Alliance	17	22
Other	1	1
Not to vote	13	16

As can be seen four weeks ago only two in three people seeing themselves as Conservatives were considering voting for the party on polling day.

During the campaign this declined to 59 per cent, while at the same time support for the Alliance rose from 17 per cent to 22 per cent, among this Conservative group.

A similar analysis of Labour

"identifiers" shows a much firmer level of support. Three in four, 76 per cent., four weeks previously had intended to vote Labour and 73 per cent. did so.

The Alliance had already attracted eight per cent. of this Labour support which was delivered on polling day.

Alliance "identifies" on the other hand, although more loyal to their candidate than other voters, also showed some decline in support, from 81 per cent. four weeks before to 75 per cent. on polling day. Labour gained six per cent. of their votes and 18 per cent. did not vote.

The volatility can be partly explained by the loose ties between the voter and the party.

Under one in three, 30 per cent. of people identifying with a party said that they were a very strong supporter of that party. Almost one in two, 43 per cent, said they felt fairly strong, and 26 per cent, not very strong.

As one might expect, given party switchings, Alliance voters were significantly less attached to the party than either Conservatives or Labour voters:

	Con	Lab	Alli
Very strong	53	45	19
Fairly strong	49	36	47
Not very strong	17	18	34

Gallup also asked its sample of voters whether they had considered voting for a different party during the campaign.

One in four, 24 per cent., of voters said that they had: 12 per cent. had considered the Alliance, six per cent. the Conservatives, and five per cent. Labour.

This figure rose to 29 per cent. of the people who eventually voted for the Alliance and further to a majority of those voters who had decided in the last few days of the campaign.

When asked why they had not voted for the party they had considered four answers were mentioned by more than one in 10 of the group.

Thatcher factor

Slightly more than one in five, 21 per cent., said only that they had decided to stick to their first choice, 16 per cent. expressed dissatisfaction with the Government or with Mrs Thatcher, 13 per cent. the candidate's policies, and 12 per cent. did not like the candidate.

Only three per cent of the people who had considered voting for another party but did not do so cited the opinion polls as the reason for their change of mind.

A further seven per cent said they were voting "tactically." This combined group tended to figure more than average among Conservative-minded voters.

Five per cent mentioned extremism in the Labour party as the reason for their change of mind.

Among those people who had considered voting for the Conservative candidate but did not do so, 45 per cent. cited discontent with Mrs Thatcher and her Government's policies.

Past ties were a potent factor among the people who had considered the Alliance but did not vote that way, with 42 per cent. saying they evenally preferred to stay with their old allegiances.

If the people who decided during the campaign not to vote had actually voted the results would not have been markedly different except for a slightly increased Alliance majority.

But there could quite well be a touch of hindsight in these replies, with people rationalising their own actions.

In this study Gallup interviewed a representative quota sample of 796 electors in Brecon and Radnor between July 6 and 9 in 40 districts. At the analysis stage the claimed voting has been weighted to match the actual pattern of votes last Thursday.

Butler



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

21st June, 1985

My dear Chris,

I am writing to wish you every success in the by-election at Brecon and Radnor on Thursday, 4th July.

You have fought a highly effective campaign displaying an impressive command and detailed knowledge of local issues in what is one of the most widespread constituencies in England and Wales.

I know you will be a most worthy successor to Tom Hooson. Like him, you have a strong Welsh background. Like him too you are determined to be a hard-working, conscientious Member of Parliament committed to your constituency with time to care for everybody and their problems.

My best wishes for a great victory on 4th July.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

Chris Butler, Esq

Brecon
and Radnor
By-election

BRECON BY ELECTIONS RESULTS

The Liberals won with a slim majority of 500

The results were

Liberals	13,753	(9,226)
Labour	13,194	(9,471)
Conservatives	10,631	(18,255)

Chris Butler (Conservative candidate) will be at the Brecon Conservative Club for when you want to speak to him. The Switchboard have the telephone number