

PRIME MINISTER

Public Opinion Poll on Public Attitudes to Crime and Punishment

You may be interested in the attached which has come to me via my previous connections. It is the report of an opinion poll carried out by the Observer and commissioned by the Prison Reform Trust which is a pressure group established by a number of public figures such as Sir Monty Finniston, who is the Chairman, and David Astor. As you would expect, the report which is written by the Trust's Director, Dr. Stephen Shaw, is written very much from a liberal point of view, but there are a number of interesting points to arise from the surveys of public opinion. If you have the time, the report is worth browsing through, but particular points are at:-

Flag A: page 7: crime is perceived as equal to inflation as the second most important social problem. The concern (see Table 2) is more or less the same throughout the social classes.

Flag B: page 16: Table 18: there is considerable support for the Home Secretary's emphasis on doing something about the state of the prisons, and in particular for his strategy on building new prisons. It is interesting to note that in response to the question (which was admittedly slightly loaded) only 11% wished to leave the situation as it is.

Flag C: page 20: Table 24: of a number of measures which might reduce the prison population, overwhelmingly the most popular is community service, followed by greater use of compensation of victims, amnesties and increased use of bail. The least popular options were increased parole, more suspended sentences and shorter sentences.

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Flag D: pages 26 and 27: the conclusions, which, as I said,  
are written very much from the Prison Reform Trust's  
liberal point of view.

TS.

8 October, 1982.