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INFORMATIONSBLATT

Die Entwicklung der britischen
öffentlichen Meinung gegenüber
den Parteien

Obwohl innenpolitische Probleme im allgemeinen nicht in unserem INFORMATIONENSBLETT behandelt werden, halten wir es für nützlich, eine kürzlich vom Institut "Social Survey (Gallup Poll) Ltd.", London, ausgearbeitete Studie über die Entwicklung der britischen öffentlichen Meinung vor und nach den letzten Nachwahlen zu veröffentlichen.

DOCUMENT D'INFORMATION

L'évolution récente de l'opinion
britannique à l'égard des partis
politiques

Bien que les problèmes de politique intérieure restent normalement en dehors du champ d'observation couvert par ces DOCUMENTS D'INFORMATION, nous avons cru utile de reproduire une toute récente étude effectuée par l'Institut "Social Survey (Gallup Poll) Ltd.", de Londres, sur l'évolution de l'opinion publique britannique, avant et après les dernières élections partielles.

THE GALLUP POLL

Dr. Henry Durant

29th March 1962

"How would you vote if there were a General Election tomorrow?"

	<u>National Position</u>		
	<u>After</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Orpington</u>	<u>Orpington</u>	
Conservative	27,5 %	32,5 %	- 5 %
Labour	33	36	- 3
Liberal	21,5	13	+ 8,5
Other	1	-,5	+ 1,5
Don't know	17	18	- 1

There can be little surprise in these figures for regular readers of the Gallup Political Index.

In December last we pointed out:

"For the first time in 23 years' history of Gallup Poll in this country, the Conservatives as well as the Labour Party, when taken separately, are outnumbered by the combined forces of the Liberals and the Don't Knows".

The current position of the Liberals is not a new phenomenon; merely the continuation of a process already apparent last Autumn. Orpington is the result of this process and also a cause of its acceleration.

A DANGEROUS DEPARTURE

The Conservative and Labour Parties obviously did not pay attention to our November Gallup Political Index:

"As the Graph No. 1 shows, the Liberal progress is closely tied in to the Spring and Autumn by-election seasons. Political parties live by publicity. In the by-elections the Liberals earn a place in the headlines; the electorate is reminded that Liberals exist and the Liberal vote goes up.

The current system of concentrating by-elections, suits both Labour and Conservative. The public is not reminded of Liberals' existence as frequently as they would be if by-election contests were spread over the calendar."

They broke with precedent. If Lincoln, Blackpool, Orpington, Stockton et al had polled on the same day things would not be nearly so difficult for them as they are. The current protracted Spring and Summer series of by-elections can cost them dearly.

LIBERAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Liberals, on the other hand, are making every possible use of the opportunity which we foresaw for them in the October Gallup Political Index:

"If the limelight is important to Mr. Macmillan and the Conservative Party, it is even more important to the Liberals. Denied the publicity of by-election activity during the summer 'closed-season', the Liberals have slipped in the voting figures."

"Shortly, the by-election season will be here again, giving the Liberals the opportunity to concentrate their limited resources upon the constituencies concerned. There is, at the moment, every reason why they should do well ...

... then, if they do well in the by-election, the nationwide publicity gained should help the Liberals to step up their support as registered in the Gallup national figures."

And in the November Gallup Political Index:

"For supporters of the Liberals, the goals are entirely opposite. By every legitimate means, they must seek publicity ...".

LABOUR OUSTED

In the Gallup Political Index, September last, we pointed out that Labour "seems cast for the role of the Perpetual Student in Government". Now, six months later, we have to point out that even this consolation has slipped from them in the dormitory constituencies.

Only now do commentators point to Labour's forfeited Orpington deposit as a rejection of Labour by the white collar workers. Yet in the September Gallup Political Index we pointed out:

"It appears that the Labour Party have not, so far, widened the breach in the ranks of the white collar workers (AV). Unless they succeed here, unless they can persuade the Government supporters at present smarting under Selwyn Lloyd's wage policy, to drop out of the Conservative army, and to join up in Labour's ranks, they are doomed to lose the battle of the ballot box. But if Labour fails and misses this opportunity of recruiting the defectors, apparently so ripe for the harvest, when will they ever govern?"

Labour has now, e.g. last night's party political broadcast, turned its attention on the white collar workers. The problem with the white collar workers in places like Orpington is that they feel friendless. The Government is helping everyone except them.

"Affluence" is in danger of becoming a "dirty word" with them. The Government is helping those lower in the social scale with all the benefits of the "affluent society" to catch up and even surpass them. It is helping the "well-to-do" with high Bank Rates and surtax concessions. (The 'white collar' workers were, of course, nowhere near the surtax mark.)

If the Conservatives are against them, so, they feel, are Labour, with its big unions protecting the mass of the working class! To join Labour's ranks would be to go out of the frying pan into the fire, to eliminate this precious differential which they have come to believe in as their right.

So they turn to the Liberals. But, how far can the Liberal Party in fact hold them without a fundamental readjustment in Liberal policies and principles?

THE ART OF MAKING (MIDDLE CLASS) FRIENDS

Clearly, Labour has little chance to win over the white collar workers by cultivating their self-interest. If Labour could get the middle class to believe in its concern for them, it could only do so at the expense of the solid Labour union interests. If it tries to please both interests, it certainly will not hold the white collar workers and may well end up by displeasing everybody.

After the 1959 General Election we pointed out:

"The Liberals, in fact, offered an alternative way of registering an anti-Conservative vote. Moreover, they succeeded in convincing some people, notably the new electors coming on to the register for the first time and the middle-class anti-Tories, that they, not Labour, formed the radical party"

"... the Liberals begin to constitute a real threat to Labour."
(News Chronicle, 28th November, 1960)

The Labour Party will never win over the white collar worker who is simply concerned with defending his own position in the present society. The only element of the middle class, lower or upper, open to Labour are those, who, as in 1945, voted Labour believing it to stand for a better society. And very few people believe that any more.

For the Conservatives, on the other hand, the situation is not nearly so difficult. For example, there is a lot which Mr. Selwyn Lloyd could do in a week's time.

AND LOSING THEM

Labour supporters who, currently, gain comfort from the fact that Liberal candidates are taking two votes from Conservatives for every one from Labour, should note that this was also true in the 1955-1959 by-election series. Yet, when it came to the General Election, the situation changed sharply.

As we pointed out in the News Chronicle, 28th September, 1960:

"In the past the appearance of a Liberal candidate has taken two votes from the Conservatives and one from Labour.

In 1959, the Liberals recruited nearly as many Labour votes as the votes they recruited from the Conservatives.

Gallup Poll calculates that in the 117 constituencies where Liberals stood in 1959, but not in 1955, they took 395,200 votes from the Tories and nearly 333,000 from Labour."

In other words, the "protest vote" largely returned to the Tories. The 'radical' element stayed with the Liberals.