

PRIME MINISTER

cc. Mr. Alison

I attach a summary of the first
of the Party's private surveys in
the European Election campaign which
was conducted on 18th/19th May.

Stephen Sherbourne

24.5.84

Summary of Main Findings

1. The survey shows a Conservative lead of 6% broadly in line with other polls relating to voting intention the European Elections.
2. There are some signs of an increased likelihood of voting - on current showing we would predict a 42% turnout in comparison with 37% in April.
3. There are also some signs that differential turnout may be beginning to work to the Conservative's advantage, though it is worth noting that voters in the South of England are least likely to turn out.
4. Overwhelmingly National rather than European issues will be uppermost in peoples minds in deciding how to vote and there is a widely held view that the election should be used to express confidence - or no confidence in the Government.
5. Mrs Thatcher enjoys a comfortable lead over other Party Leaders in terms of tough negotiating with the EEC, in having friendly relations with the EEC and in getting the best deal for Britain.
6. There is no widely held belief that Britain would have fared any better in the EEC under a Labour or Alliance Government.
7. There remains however considerable Alliance potential in so far as half the Labour and Conservative supporters believe that the European Elecltion provides an opportunity for people to vote for the Alliance even if they wouldn't do so in a General Election.

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 1984

Findings of the first
'State of Battle survey'

carried out by the
Harris Research Centre
for Conservative Central Office

The findings are based on interviews with a nationally representative quota sample of 1102 electors interviewed on the 18th and 19th May 1984.

20.5.84

1. Voting Intention

Currently the Conservatives have a 6% lead over Labour amongst all voters indicating any party preference in the European Elections. The Conservative position is weakest amongst those aged 18-24, the C2 & DE socio economic group and in the North and Scotland.

Summary Table 1

Voting Intention in European Elections

	<u>Age</u>					<u>Class</u>			
	All %	18-24 %	25-44 %	45-64 %	65+ %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Conservative	38(37)	31(32)	37(39)	41(39)	38(34)	58(56)	48(47)	33(34)	23(23)
Labour	32(31)	40(36)	29(33)	31(28)	31(32)	12(13)	22(25)	36(33)	46(45)
Liberal/SDP/ Alliance	18(16)	13(13)	21(15)	18(18)	20(20)	18(16)	19(15)	17(16)	19(18)
Other	1(*)	3(1)	2(*)	*(2)	*(-)	1(2)	1(-)	1(1)	1(*)
Won't Vote	5(5)	7(8)	5(4)	4(4)	5(5)	3(3)	4(5)	6(6)	7(5)
Don't Know	6(10)	6(9)	7(9)	5(10)	6(10)	9(11)	6(8)	6(11)	4(9)

(Figures in brackets relate to the same question asked 5th-10th April)

	<u>Region</u>		
	<u>South</u> %	<u>Midlands</u> %	<u>North and Scotland</u> %
Conservative	42(42)	38(35)	33(33)
Labour	24(25)	28(31)	42(39)
Liberal/SDP/ Alliance	21(18)	21(18)	14(14)
Other	1(-)	*(-)	1(1)
Won't Vote	6(6)	5(7)	4(3)
Don't Know	6(9)	8(10)	5(11)

2. Likelihood of voting and Differential Abstention

Since April there has been a significant increase in the percentage of electors saying they are "absolutely certain" to vote in the European Elections.

As in April Conservative and Alliance supporters are most likely to say they are "absolutely certain" to vote, but there has also been an increase in the percentage of Labour voters giving this response. (Summary Table 2).

When the voting intentions of those who say they are absolutely certain to vote are examined there is some evidence that differential abstention may currently be working marginally in favour of the Conservatives. (Summary Table 3).

This suggests that the optimum strategy is to continue to attempt to maximise the turnout of Conservative voters.

In terms of regional differences there are indications that voters in the South of England are less likely to be 'certain to vote' and it is this region which presents the greatest problem for maximising Conservative turnout.

Summary Table 2

Likelihood of Voting in European Elections

<u>May 1984</u>	<u>All Electors</u> %	<u>Voting Intention in European Elections</u>		
		<u>Con</u> %	<u>Lab</u> %	<u>Alnc</u> %
Absolutely certain	33	39	31	38
Certain	18	20	23	12
Will probably	22	21	24	27
Will probably not	22	18	18	16
Don't Know	5	3	4	6
 <u>April 1984</u>				
Absolutely certain	26	32	25	30
Certain	22	25	23	23
Will probably	28	26	32	30
Will probably not	18	13	15	15
Don't Know	5	4	5	2

3.
Summary Table 2 contd.

Likelihood of Voting in European Elections

<u>March 1984</u>	Voting Intention in European Elections			
	<u>All Electors</u> %	<u>Con</u> %	<u>Lab</u> %	<u>Alnce</u> %
Absolutely certain	29	33	30	33
Certain	18	20	22	17
Will probably	26	27	25	31
Will probably not	23	17	18	16
Dont Know	4	3	4	3
 <u>January 1984</u>				
Absolutely certain	27	26	28	31
Certain	19	22	20	16
Will probably	27	29	27	25
Will probably not	21	18	20	21
Don't Know	6	5	5	6

Summary Table 3

	<u>All electors giving a party preference</u> %	<u>All electors absolutely certain or certain to vote giving a party preference</u> %
Conservative	42	45
Labour	36	35
Liberal/SDP/Alliance	22	19
Other	1	*

Influence of Individuals' votes

Although only 38% of voters think it makes a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of difference whether they vote in the European Elections and 69% think it makes 'not much' or 'no difference at all' whether they vote, these responses also indicate, as in April, a slightly lower degree of apathy amongst Conservative voters.

Summary Table 4

Q. How much difference do you think it will make whether you vote in the European Elections for the European Parliament or not?

	<u>Voting Intention</u>			
	<u>All Electors</u> %	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Alliance</u> %
A great deal	17(15)	22(18)	15(15)	14(15)
Quite a lot	21(25)	26(31)	20(23)	18(24)
Not much	40(41)	34(37)	43(46)	48(43)
None at all	19(15)	13(11)	18(12)	17(16)
Dont Know	4(4)	4(3)	4(5)	2 (3)

(Figures in brackets relate to the same question asked 5th-10th April)

4. Issues

4.1. An overwhelming majority of voters believe that national issues (73%) as opposed to European Issues (20%) will be more important in deciding how they vote. This applies across all demographic, geographic and political groups.

4.2. In so far as European issues are of importance the electorate is extremely critical of the bad effect of the EEC on food prices and on balance believes that it has had a detrimental rather than a beneficial effect on unemployment. On overseas travel, regional aid, exports and defence the EEC is thought to have had a marginally beneficial effect.

Summary Table 5

	<u>EEC</u> <u>has had a</u> <u>bad effect</u> %	<u>EEC</u> <u>has had a</u> <u>good effect</u> %
Price of food	74	9
Number of people in work	36	5
Prices other than food	24	7
Imports into Britain	21	21
Britain's export effect	18	28

Summary Table 5

	<u>EEC</u> <u>has had a</u> <u>bad effect</u> %	<u>EEC</u> <u>has had a</u> <u>good effect</u> %
Efforts to get rid of poverty	17	6
Development of new industries	14	19
Training unemployed young people	14	12
Britain's defences	11	16
Helping different regions in G.B.	9	21
Travel overseas	5	30
Don't Know/None	8	27

4.3. By a 2:1 majority voters believe that Britain has done not very well or not at all well from its membership of the EEC rather than very well or fairly well. Conservative voters are more evenly divided in their views.

Summary Table 6

How well Britain has done from EEC membership

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Alliance</u> %
Very Well	2	2	1	2
Fairly well	26	42	17	19
Not very well	38	34	40	43
Not at all well	31	20	39	33
Don't Know	3	2	4	3

However only 53% of Labour supporters (and 2% of Conservatives) believe that Britain would have done better under a Labour Government. Similarly only 46% of Alliance supporters (and 7% of Conservatives) believe that Britain would have done better under an Alliance Government.

4.4. Conservatives are the party most widely thought to be 'most likely to get Europe, that is the Common Market, working together'. While responses, predictably, relate to voting intention, the lack of enthusiasm among Labour voters for their own party is striking.

Summary Table 7

Voting Intention

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Alliance</u> %
Party most likely to get Europe working together.				
Conservative	39	78	12	15
Labour	20	3	56	3
Alliance	19	7	12	63
Other	1	*	2	1
Don't Know	20	11	18	18

5. The Impact of the European Elections

Only 2% of voters claim to have heard 'a great deal' about the European Elections and a further 11% 'quite a lot'. Two thirds have heard 'not very much' and a quarter 'nothing at all'. With the exception of middle class voters who are marginally better informed (21% claim to have heard 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot') there are no differences between any of political, demographic or regional groups.

6. The Party Leaders

More than three quarters of all voters believe that Mrs Thatcher is the toughest leader when it comes to arguing with other Common Market leaders. She is also significantly ahead of any of the other Party leaders in terms of getting the best deal for Britain from the Common Market, and having friendly relations with other Common Market Leaders. Mrs Thatcher's standing amongst Conservative voters is substantially greater than that of the other party leaders amongst their own supporters.

Voting Intention

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Alliance</u> %
Will get the best deal for Britain from the Common Market.				
Mrs Thatcher	49	90	16	30
Mr. Kinnock	21	3	54	6
Mr. Steel	12	2	11	32
Dr. Owen	7	3	6	22

The Party Leaders contd.

	<u>Voting Intention</u>			
	<u>All</u> %	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Alliance</u> %
best at having friendly relations with other Common Market leaders				
Mrs Thatcher	30	54	12	17
Mr. Kinnock	17	4	43	7
Mr. Steel	20	15	17	36
Dr. Owen	14	13	9	26
is toughest when it comes to arguing with other Common Market leaders				
Mrs Thatcher	79	94	63	77
Mr. Kinnock	9	2	19	5
Mr. Steel	3	1	4	5
Dr. Owen	3	1	3	7

7. Tactical and other influences on voting

7.1 Two thirds of voters irrespective of Party loyalty agree with the view that voters should use their European vote to express approval or disapproval of the British Government.

7.2 There is little support for the view that 'I feel like voting against this Government in order to give them a fright'. Only 32% of all voters and 8% of Conservative supporters agree with this attitude.

7.3 There is however, considerable Alliance potential which, as of now has not been translated into voting intention. 52% of all voters including almost half the Labour and Conservative supporters agree with the proposition that 'The European Elections would be a good opportunity for people to vote for the Alliance even if they wouldn't vote for them in a General Election'.

7.4 The level of apathy is underlined by the fact that 42% of all voters agree, and 50% disagree with the view that 'It doesn't make much difference to me who gets elected to the European Parliament'. A further pointer towards a Conservative benefit from differential abstention is provided in the voting intention analysis of this question. While 46% of Labour and 39% of Alliance supporters accept this view only 31% of Conservatives agree with it.

7.5 More than 8 voters in 10 agree that 'not many people bother to vote in European Elections'. This is common to all segments of the electorate.

7.6 There is also a potential for increasing turnout, in that only 21% agree and 72% disagree with the view that 'The Elections for the European Parliament are not important so it doesn't matter whether people vote or not'. Labour voters are only marginally more likely than the electorate as a whole to agree with this.

9.

7.7. 59% of all voters including 26% of Labour supporters accept the view that 'Labour can't make up its mind whether they want to be in or out of Europe so a vote for them would be a wasted vote'.

7.8. 46% of all voters including significant minorities of Labour (29%) and Alliance (38%) supporters accept the view that 'Conservatives are respected abroad more than other politicians'.