

## MASS-OBSERVATION SPECIAL DIRECTIVE

### THE GENERAL ELECTION 1987

Once in a while we send out what we call a 'Special Directive' when we think that the importance of an occasion justifies it. The General Election that has just been announced is surely just such an occasion. Please read the following through carefully before you write anything. Don't be dismayed if you can't manage all that I suggest just do what you can..

1. Would you as soon as possible please, note the factors that will determine your vote, say who you think will win the local seat and why, and which party you think will win nationally. Keep this as a log and note any changes as the campaign progresses.
2. Make notes on the campaign styles of different parties or individual candidates, including remarks, and activity (or the lack of it) which suggest the state of a party's morale, and report on your experience of door-to-door canvassing. Don't forget that negative reporting is as valuable as positive reporting, so if there is no canvassing locally, say so.
3. If possible report on election posters in your street as follows: total number of houses in street followed by numbers of posters for each party. Ideally this should be done on the same day once a week up to Voting Day itself. If you can't manage all that at least try to make a count in the last week of the campaign. Date all observations.
4. Please do keep your ears open (and your minds retentive!) for comments by the public, however trivial these may seem to you; try if you can to record at least one a day. Again, remember negative reporting on lack of interest, boredom, and lack of intention to vote.
5. On Voting Day itself please be particularly alert and note as much as your circumstances allow of what is going on in the way of last minute canvassing, voting activity, remarks overheard, the weather etc.
6. Finally, if you stayed up for the results, tell us whether you intended to or not, whether you were on your own or not, how you passed the time. Give reactions to the local and national results. Next morning please record the first remark about the result made to you directly, and the first overheard comment.

DO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE NOT CONDUCTING A POLL. OTHERS WILL COLLECT PEOPLE'S VOTING INTENTIONS IN VAST QUANTITIES. WE ARE LOOKING FOR THE THINKING BEHIND AND AROUND VOTING DECISIONS, AND FOR ELECTION BEHAVIOUR OF ALL SORTS: THE MORE LOCAL, DETAILED AND CONCRETE THE BETTER.

David Pocock