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The Guardian

Bickering Alliance helps Labour break through poll barrier

Guardian Marplan

Martin Linton

LABOUR has reached a six-year high in the Guardian Marplan Index with a February rating of 42 per cent, one point behind the Government at 43 per cent.

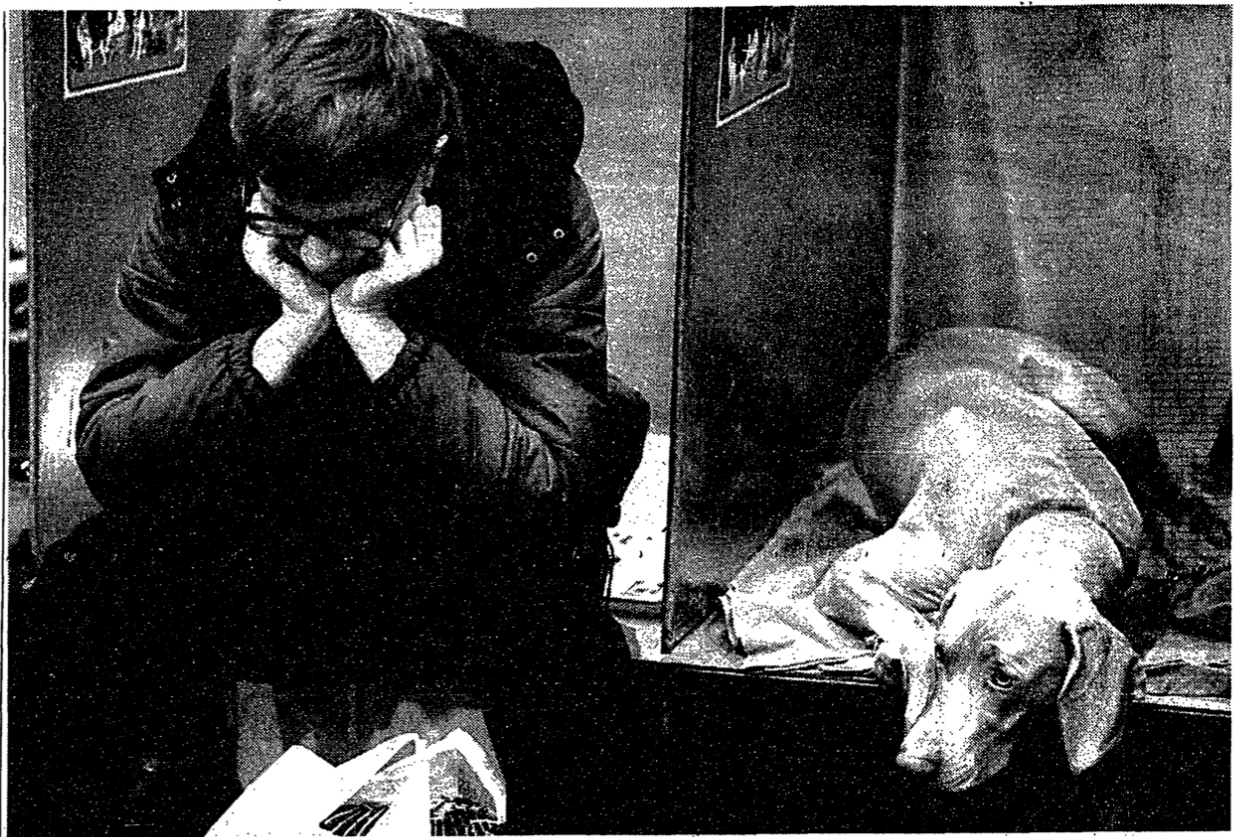
been more than usually volatile over the last few months and the polls have recorded rapid fluctuations. Last month's Marplan Index in the Guardian put the Conservatives just 2 per cent ahead, but a week later Gallup gave them a lead of 7 1/2 per cent.

Table with columns: Now, Jan, Dec, Nov, Elec. Rows: Con, Lab, Lib/SDP, Other, Con lead.

They put the Conservatives at 45%, Labour at 37 and the Alliance, then in the middle of its merger negotiations row, down at 15. But at the end of January, Mori gave the Government a commanding 14 point lead with the Conservatives at 50, with Labour at 36 and the Alliance at 12.



"If an election were to be held tomorrow, which party would you vote for: Conservative, Labour or Alliance? A...L...L...L...A...N..."



COMPETITORS at Cruft's Dog Show, which opened yesterday, pictured by Martin Armitage waiting to show their paces in the Gundog section.

Earls Court exhibition centre in London with owners and full make up in tow. Some even had lucky rabbit mascots in their pens. All have won at least one champion's certificate this year to qualify for Cruft's, where success can be worth a small fortune in stud fees and dog food commercials.

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It is the Alliance parties that have suffered, dropping from 17 to 14 per cent after the fiasco of their merger negotiations and the divisions revealed by their conferences at Blackpool and Sheffield over the last month.

What the Marplan polls appear to show is that disillusioned Alliance supporters, who have been drifting away since the merger negotiations and the ill-feeling and public acrimony which came in its wake, are moving in greater numbers to Labour.

These are the very voters that Mr Kinnock has made it his job to attract to Labour. But he will be only too aware that their support is likely to be highly volatile. It could be lost as easily as it is gained if internal divisions in the Labour Party match those in the Alliance.

Marplan interviewed a tightly-controlled quota sample of 1,276 adults aged 18-plus in 103 randomly selected constituencies countrywide. Interviews were conducted face-to-face between February 5 and 9.

Thatcher in new confrontation

John Palmer in Brussels and James Naughtie

MRS THATCHER and the Irish Prime Minister, Mr Charles Haughey, are to meet today in Brussels in a highly charged atmosphere as the row over the Stalker affair continues unabated.

While Irish government officials would not be drawn on the precise demands Mr Haughey seems clear they include, at least the partial publication of some of the three separate reports into the "shoot to kill" affair.

Forest put a stop to Clough's Welsh mission

Ian Ridley

BRIAN Clough, one of soccer's most buoyant figures, was left deflated yesterday when his desire to become part-time manager of Wales was blocked by his full-time employ-

ers, Nottingham Forest. The chairman, Maurice Roworth, who met officials of the Football Association of Wales earlier this week and agreed in theory to Clough accepting a two-year, £10,000-per-annum contract provided he was not away from the club for more

than 10 three-day periods, said yesterday's board meeting unanimously decided the two jobs were incompatible.

Dagenham Euro-threat

Stephen Cook reports from Cologne

WE ARE cursing the English all right, says a jovial German car worker as he heads through the driving rain towards the bright blue Ford plant at Cologne to start his morning shift.

15-minute reduction in the working day. But his response was typical of many of his fellow-workers in the land of Vorsprung durch Technik to the four-day-old strike by their significantly worse-paid counterparts in Britain: a slightly bemused solidarity, coloured by anxiety that if the strike does bite, the Cologne end of the production line will have to start worrying.

during the strike, but it spoke volumes about the more comfortable union-management relations in West Germany.

News in brief

Tomorrow: THE new 20-page Saturday section, Guardian Choices, with helpful thoughts on how to pass your leisure time.
Community crisis hopes: THE leaders of the 12 European Community governments were last night wrestling with a complicated compromise to the EEC budget crisis. Page 24.
Under pressure: Speculation grew in Vienna that the two partners in Austria's governing coalition are pressing on President Kurt Waldheim to resign. Page 10.

Investor action: THE Stock Exchange is facing the threat of government action over its treatment of small investors. Page 14.
College cuts: SEVEN universities are scheduled to have their grants cut in the next two years, according to figures released by the University Grants Committee. Page 2.
Seamen fined: THE National Union of Seamen was fined £7,500 in the High Court for failing to call off an illegal strike immediately. Page 4.
Somme record: A RESEARCH museum, largely hinging on the British role in the battle of the Somme, will be set up in Amiens. Page 10.

Divided city: LABOUR-controlled Birmingham council, which is split after spending millions promoting the city for sports events, faces a threatened strike over staff cuts. Page 2.
Plutonium row: TWO US Congress committees have objected to British Nuclear Fuels' plan to fly plutonium to Japan. Page 4.
Party time: THE Tory Central Office is resigned to a weekend of embarrassment as Young Conservatives gather in Eastbourne. Page 8.
Walking out: SOME 1,200 health workers walked out at three Glasgow hospitals. Page 3.

Bus Stop top just the ticket

John Ezard

THE skimpy black-laced blouse worn by Marilyn Monroe in the film Bus Stop sold at Sotheby's for £7,150 yesterday, more than twice the forecast price, in an auction full of nostalgia, affection and reminiscence.

Hertfordshire property developer, who wanted it to launch his 16-year-old daughter Chantelle's show business career.

regard it as the work in which she triumphed after studio quarrels by showing "a new gift for pathos, playing a small time showgirl who ekes out a living by wiggling her hips for cowboys. It was the first time audiences were fully aware of her vulnerability."

Your Guardian comes today in two redesigned sections

In section one, you will find the Home News, International News, Financial News and Sports News, running on in that order. The two editorial pages of Comment and Analysis, clearly separated from the news, appear on the two pages inside the back of this section. The back page itself, like the front page, combines major news from home and abroad. The main Crossword is there, too.

Today's second section is Review Guardian, with all the books, records and arts events of the week. There are two new pages of entertainments

listings. On the back page of the second section, you will find a full page of Television and Radio programmes together with a new expanded Weather service. Inside the back, there is the new Personal Page, with obituaries, appreciations, birthdays, and our legal service. Cartoons - including the new Bloom County strip - and the Quick Crossword face Personal.

Table with 2 columns: Index to today's paper, and corresponding page numbers for various sections like Arts, Books, Business and Finance, etc.