



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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British General ElectionBackground Note*(Pri. 9a)*

At the time of writing, over 95% of the results have been declared in the British General Election, with computer predictions indicating that the Conservative Government is to be returned with an overall, but reduced, majority of 17.

The national swing against the Tories appears to have been around approx. 2%, well below the 8% required by Labour for an overall majority and the 6% swing which would have made Labour the largest party. Labour polled rather better in many key marginals (approx. 4% swing) but failed to capture more than half of their target seats in London and the West Midlands. In Scotland there was actually a 3% swing to the Conservatives.

The percentage shares of the vote in this election and in 1987 were as follows:

	1992	1987
Conservative	43%	43%
Labour	36%	32%
Liberal Democrat	18%	23% (Lib/SDP Alliance)

The Conservative vote has not altered in percentage terms from the 1987 election. This is dramatically different from the eve of poll predictions that the Conservatives were on 37%, Labour 38%, and Lib Dems. 20%. In this election, the Labour gains in the popular vote appear to have been made at the expense of the Liberal Democrats. Against this, the Tory vote appears to be less advantageously spread, i.e. Labour got substantial swings in marginals, thus reducing the number of Tory seats by a much greater proportion than their popular vote.

The current predictions for seats in the House of Commons as a result of the 1992 British General Election are (1987 figures in brackets):

Conservatives	334	(375)
Labour	272	(229)
Liberal Democrat	21	(23)
Other (incl. N.I. seats)	24	(24)

Comment

The result is a surprise to most commentators, given the polls on the eve of election which pointed to a hung Parliament with Labour as the largest party.

It will be a severe disappointment to Labour who believed their chances of ousting the Conservative Government were strengthened by the calling of the election in the middle of a recession, the lack of money for the Government to propose significant tax cuts, and the lingering memories of a deeply unpopular community charge or "poll tax". The outcome must represent a setback in particular for Neil Kinnock for whom this election was widely viewed in advance as a make or break effort. The failure under advantageous circumstances to remove the Tories from Government seems likely to focus attention on Kinnock's leadership. Nevertheless, the gains made by Labour may be sufficient to maintain the Party's leading role in opposition, and prevent a more radical realignment of anti-Tory politics.

The result will also disappoint the Liberal Democrats who were judged to have fought a successful campaign and who pinned hopes on the leverage a hung Parliament might have afforded.

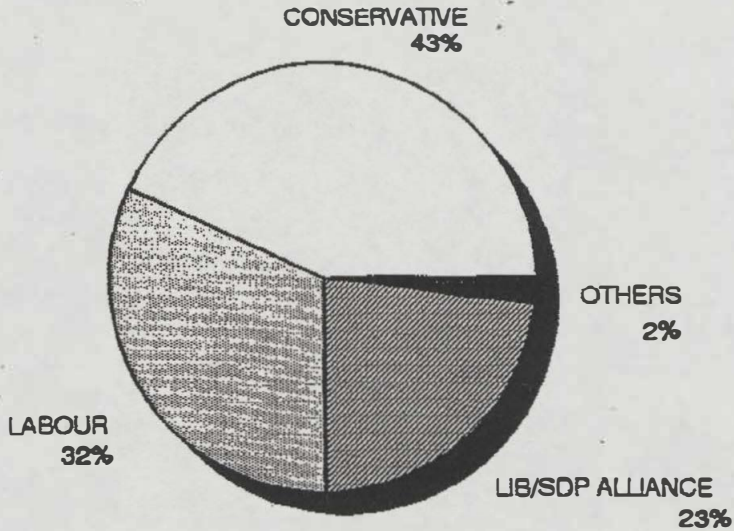
The outcome is a clear success for Prime Minister Major who can now claim his own majority rather than the one he inherited. Although the majority is relatively slim it is probably sufficient to safeguard the Government against inevitable bye-election losses during the life of the Parliament (the Conservatives lost seven during the last Parliament).

In Scotland, the Tories will undoubtedly claim their 3% increase in the popular vote and likely net gain of one seat (to ten seats) as vindication of their defence of the constitutional status quo. This is unlikely to lower the political amongst an electorate which continues by a very large majority to demand change in this area.

As always in the immediate aftermath of a British General Election, the iniquities of the "first past the post" system will be highlighted. There will be particular interest in which way the Labour Party resolves its internal debate on this issue, given the perception that the traditional scepticism within the party towards proportional representation is eroding.

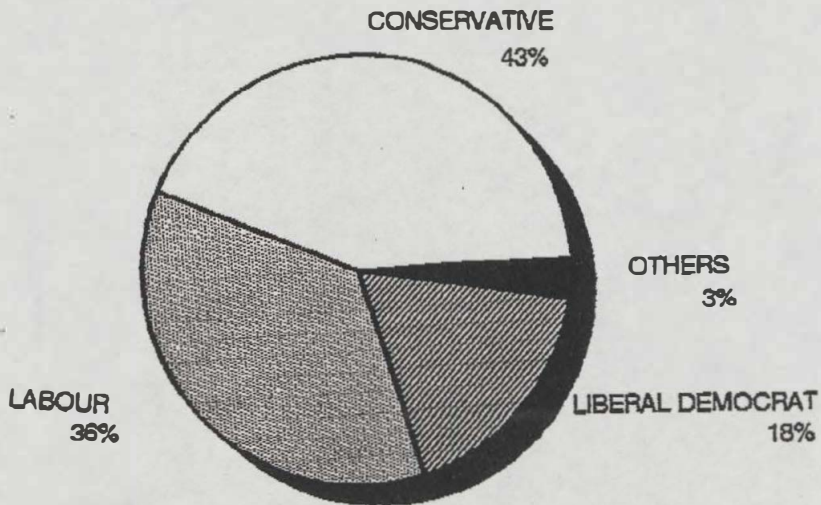
Anglo-Irish Section
10 April 1992

UNITED KINGDOM GENERAL ELECTION 1987

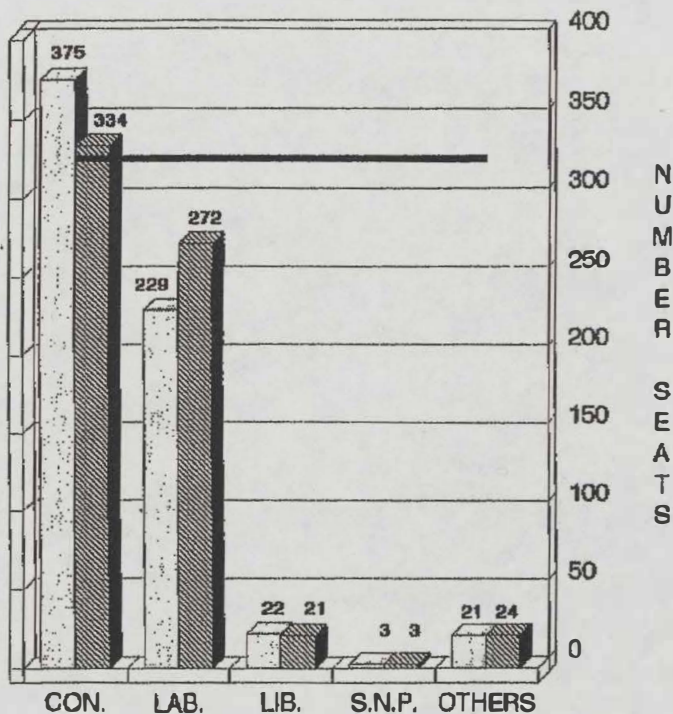


UNITED KINGDOM GENERAL ELECTION 1992 *

*: PROJECTED WITH
632 SEATS DECLARED



UNITED KINGDOM ELECTION 9 APRIL 1992



*: PROJECTED FIGURE WITH
632 SEATE DECLARED

1987

1992

OVERALL MAJ.

UNITED KINGDOM GENERAL ELECTION 1992

