

another soldier, and Joe and Arthur would be missing in the trenches, and Colin Gregg would be shot.

My mother kissed me and told me to say my prayers before I went to sleep. She told me to pray for the peace to continue, as she intended to do herself. There was just a chance, she said, that it might.

She went away and I lay awake, beginning to hate the Germans and not feeling ashamed of it, like Mrs Ashburton was. No German would ever have played tennis that day, I thought, no German would have stood around having tea and sandwiches and meringues, smacking away the midges when night came. The Germans weren't like that. The Germans wouldn't see the joke when my

father said for all he knew Lloyds Bank owned Mrs Ashburton.

I didn't pray for the peace to continue, but prayed instead that my father and Dick might come back when the war was over. I didn't pray that Joe and Arthur and Colin Gregg should come back because that would be asking too much, because some men had to be killed, according to Mrs Ashburton's law of averages. I hadn't understood her when Mrs Ashburton had said that cruelty was natural in wartime, but I understood now. I understood her law of averages and her sitting alone in her dark kitchen, crying over the past. I cried myself, thinking of the grass growing again on her tennis court, and the cruelty that was natural.

The Black Patch

That black patch hiding the blind crater
Scooped out by Somme shrapnel used to scare
Some children. "Where's that man's eye?"
They'd ask, loud enough for him to hear,
And I'd want to hit them, almost to cry,
Thinking him hurt by such innocent chatter.

But he didn't seem to mind. Most of his life
He learned to live with lop-sided sight,
Driving a car, playing a game of tennis,
Catching up on the classics. At night,
Or when no strangers were there, he'd slip off this
Elastic-tight piratical patch, shock-safe.

Strange I was never shocked . . . but then, I suppose,
Leaning over my cot he seemed the expected
Newborn prince of the world, the true
Flaw-forgiven face of the love-accepted.
Later I glanced sidelong; and as I grew,
That sort of shyness grew that can't look close.

He never complained. Once, in the first warm sun,
The other eye snuffed, I caught him looking down
Utterly dejected—shut in, night-walled.
I thought: Wasn't it sufficient for a man
To spend his days with a half-sight of this world?

"Mind how you go" I said.

Next month he'd gone.

J. C. Hall

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The Times Literary Supplement is your kind of journal – a weekly publication devoted to the exploration of ideas and the whole world of books.

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T·L·S

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R. H. S. Crossman

Are the Political Pollsters Doing a Serious Job?

Psephology between Social Science & Journalism

IN MY EXPERIENCE politicians suffer from a mild kind of schizophrenia about opinion polls. Of course they are omnivorously read at Westminster as well as round the corner in the two Party Headquarters in Smith Square. Yet in his public statements about them, the politician—especially when the polls have made an adverse prediction—tends to express a lordly disdain for their accuracy; and if the election results confirm their predictions, he begins to talk darkly about the malignant influence the pollsters exert on the mind of the electorate. All this is to be expected. What however has surprised and disconcerted me more than once has been the discovery of how little is known—even in the highest circles—about the actual methods employed in polling and the degree of reliability which can reasonably be expected of their predictions.

Until now there has been a good excuse for this ignorance. Although quite a literature has grown up on market research and public surveys generally, no single book was available which concentrated on the narrower topic of the political opinion polls which provide the electoral surveys appearing regularly in the British Press. They are five in number.

The first, "Gallup", was imported from the United States and set up under the title *The British Institute of Public Opinion* in 1937 when it became attached to the *News Chronicle* under Sir Gerald Barry. (BtPo won its spurs at the Fulham by-election in 1938, and confounded Sir Winston Churchill in 1945 by almost alone forecasting the overwhelming Labour victory at the Polls). In 1951 *Research Services Ltd.* was

established as a subsidiary of an advertising agency, *The London Press Exchange*, whose market research was under the direction of that formidable political pollster, Dr Mark Abrams. (In the old days it published its results in the *Daily Graphic* but now has no regular outlet in Fleet Street though Dr Abrams does a lot of special survey work for the Labour Party as well as for such organisations as PEP.) In 1957 *National Opinion Polls* was established as an affiliate of Associated Newspapers Ltd. and has since then worked for the *Daily Mail*.

More recently three new polls have been established. *The Opinion Research Centre* was founded in 1965 with the encouragement of the Conservative Central Office and began publishing in 1967 in the *Evening Standard* and occasionally in the *Sunday Times*. In 1968 McCann Erickson Advertising which is owned by Interpublic founded Marplan which works for *The Times* and for Independent Television News. Two years later the *Louis Harris Poll*, well-known in the United States, established a British branch which is jointly owned by ORC, Beaverbrook Newspapers and its American parent company, *Louis Harris Associates*. All these organisations do extensive commercial market research (in the case of Gallup, NOP, and Marplan it amounts to 90% of turnover) as well as surveys for academic institutions, Government departments, and other public corporations.

It is upon the work of these five organisations that the joint authors of *Political Opinion Polls*¹ have concentrated their attention. Their report on the industry to which they belong is written not only with clarity but with a candour which charmed me out of my initial scepticism when I read on the dust cover that Mr Teer is Managing

¹ *Political Opinion Polls*. By F. TEER and J. D. SPENCE. Hutchinson, £3.50, paper £2.00.