

It's Shriver 42, Agnew 41, for Top Job

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By Haynes Johnson

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In the past few years mention of Spiro Agnew's name to voters across the country invariably drew a common reaction. People would laugh. Then they would go on to mention such things as golf balls, comic watches or offer stronger and generally unfavorable remarks.

There is less laughter about Agnew today. He is viewed with more mixed feelings, and even a new measure of respect. But the voters interviewed for these articles are firmly of the opinion today that the Vice President would not make a good President.

Although our voters favor Richard Nixon by a 59-31 per cent margin, those same citizens overwhelmingly give Agnew a negative rating. When asked whether Agnew would make a

good President, 57 per cent of all voters said no. Only 27 per cent said yes. The rest had no opinion.

Agnew also trails behind the Democratic vice presidential nominee, Sargent Shriver, when the voters are asked to choose between the two men.

If the presidential choice this year were limited to Agnew and Shriver, 42

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per cent of all voters said they preferred Shriver to the 41 per cent favoring Agnew.

The voters' unflattering feelings about Agnew are shown more sharply when you look at the various elements of the electorate. Not a single voter category—including registered Republicans and those calling themselves

conservatives—thinks Agnew would make a good President.

Here is the breakdown.

Only 39 per cent of Nixon voters believe the President's running mate would be a good chief executive. With one exception—those 50 years and older—the voters view Agnew more critically.

The percentages of the various groups who think he would make a good President show: only 8 per cent of McGovern voters; 25 per cent of the Democrats; 36 per cent of the Republicans; 22 per cent of the independents; 15 per cent of the liberals; 38 per cent of the conservatives; 26 per cent of the moderates; 30 per cent of the men; 24 per cent of the women; 32 per cent of the blue-collar workers; 7 per cent of young voters between the ages of 18

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and 24; and 41 per cent of those over the age of 50.

The problem with Agnew, in the voters' minds, is that he is still too blunt, too divisive, too controversial to govern the country. In this perception, Agnew is regarded much like George Wallace. Wallace, too, gets credit for being outspoken, for having the courage to say what he really thinks, for being independent and for the little man. But like Agnew, he is not generally thought of as being presidential.

Meet, for example, Jan Wieckowski. He's the kind of man that both Wallace and Agnew appeal to: strong for law and order; strong for greater authority in the government. He's also a Nixon voter of four years ago who is staying with the President.

Wieckowski, who came to America 12 years ago from Poland and is now in his early 40s, was waxing his car on a warm, sunny day in South Boston. Although he was saying he still planned to vote for Mr. Nixon, his real favorite this year had been Wallace.

"I'd vote for him, believe me," he said. "George Wallace, he would keep the good order in the country."

But when he was asked about Agnew, Wieckowski paused before answering. "He's like a king," he finally said. "He's something like the people from Europe. Heavy hands. Hard discipline. But for the American style, no. He's not good."

Wieckowski thinks Agnew would make a bad President. He definitely prefers Shriver over the Vice President.

Other voters express their disapproval differently.

"Agnew wouldn't make no Presi-

dent," said a retired druggist outside of Houston, Tex., who is a straight Republican voter, and plans to vote for the Nixon-Agnew ticket again. "He's too radical. He's a good man to work with Nixon, but everytime he gets up he puts his foot in it. The best thing Agnew has done is putting Kennedy in his place, but he wouldn't make a good President. He pops off when he shouldn't."

Another Texas voter, who backed Wallace four years ago and has now switched to Nixon, interestingly compares Agnew to George McGovern. Agnew, too, would "have problems gaining the confidence of the people."

He added:

"Agnew's not diplomatic enough. He'd be fighting with people rather than accomplishing anything."

In Emsworth, Pa., another Nixon voter, a mailman by occupation, dislikes Agnew for a different reason.

"He gets radical with young kids," this man commented. "He should listen to them more often."

In neighboring Duquesne, a steelworker was asked about Agnew. He smiled, and said: "He sure is changing. He's an attractive man with a nice looking family but I think we better look elsewhere for a presidential candidate. Agnew would be another Goldwater."

His Goldwater analogy was voiced by a New Jersey citizen, who said simply of Agnew: "He might push the wrong button."

Clearly, Agnew's role as the cutting edge of the Republican Party has hurt him. Among his admirers, it's not unusual to find voters who express sympathy for him, and a form of disapproval for the role in which they think the President has cast him.

"I think Agnew's more intelligent than the speeches he gives indicate," said a Pennsylvania housewife. "I think he's a very stable individual

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based on his work as governor of Maryland. I think he's saying what Nixon said when he lost the governorship of California.

"Nixon can't afford to get mad any more and sling mud, so he has Agnew do it for him."

And in Los Angeles, a young salesman put it this way:

"He's very outspoken. Most of the things I agree with him. It was wrong for the Republicans to make him the clown, the fool."

Of course, Agnew does have his loyal band of supporters. They tend to be as strong for Agnew as the Wallace voters were for the Alabama governor. As a group, they are conservative and often express their admiration for Agnew in patriotic terms.

A woman in Clawson, Mich., praised Agnew for "speaking out" and "saying what he thinks." Then she said: "He says a lot what the common man thinks. We're not a perfect country, but we're the best there is. I respect

my flag and Agnew reflects that feeling."

Not surprisingly, Agnew's supporters are most vocal in the South. As George Lardner of *The Post* reports, from Florida:

"Spiro Agnew is a big man down South. Several people said they like him better than Nixon; like Wallace, Agnew speaks his mind. In Florida, anti-Kennedy feeling continues to be strong. John Kennedy didn't carry Florida in 1960 and I doubt that Ted Kennedy could in '76.

"And when you ask voters here about Sargent Shriver, the ones I talked with would reply, 'Kennedy kin'—as though that were enough to dismiss him forever."

Lardner's point about Shriver is true not only in the South. Everywhere we went the answers about Shriver are sharply contrasted.

A Shriver fan club does exist. It includes the kinds of people who will say, "Oh, yes, he is good; that's the kind of man we need; he'd make a fine President." We met voters who think

ver the best of all the candidates
all.

t the negative responses are also
gly expressed. Invariably, they
interwined with what a person
s of the Kennedys.

Shriver's strong public identification
the Kennedys is thus a mixed
sing for him politically. For those
admire the Kennedys, his relation-
with the family is often enough to
Shriver the highest respect. For
ers, perhaps more numerous, the
Kennedy ties are enough to discredit
n. That's what's wrong with him,
se people will say.

Shriver does have more positive as-
sations than merely his family back-
bund. Those who like him, speak fa-
rably of his work with the Peace
rps—but, interestingly, almost never
th the war on poverty—and his role
a diplomat. They think of him as dy-
mic, personable, attractive.

Patti Orr, a 22-year-old teacher in
exas, was typical. She likes Shriver's
nile, his energy, his Peace Corps
ackground. She also likes him for
aving his 92-year-old mother beside
m when he made his nationally tele-
sed vice presidential acceptance
eech.

"He knows how to talk to people,"
rs. Orr says.

While she would vote for Shriver
ver Agnew, she is nevertheless sup-
orting Mr. Nixon over McGovern.

Because of all the emotional under-
arrents surrounding the McGovern-
om Eagleton incident, it is hard to
dge the public feeling about Shriver,
ae candidate. But Shriver does come
ff well by comparison.

Of all our voters, 37 per cent
thought Shriver was a better choice
for the Democrats than the 35 per cent
who said he wasn't. Among both Mc-
Govern voters and Democrats, he
fared even better.

By 49-to-28-per cent, all our McGov-
ern voters said Shriver was a better
choice for the Democrats than Eagl-
ton. Among Democratic voters, Shriver
again came out on top by 39 to 33 per
cent.

Indeed, we encountered voters who
say Shriver's presence on the ticket
has been decisive in convincing them
to vote for McGovern. JoAnne Joe, 22,
a student in Los Angeles, was one of
these.

"Wallace was my first choice," she
said. "I didn't like Humphrey or Mus-
kie, and I vacillated on McGovern. I
guess it was really a process of elimi-
nation. When Wallace was shot I was
debating on whether to vote at all.

"I decided on McGovern when he
chose Shriver. I kind of mistrust Mc-
Govern, but Shriver lends him some
stability. Why Shriver? Well, I really
wanted to see Ted Kennedy run, even
over Wallace. I guess it's just because
of JFK and RFK."

As we have said, Shriver led Agnew
by 1 percentage point in a head-to-head
match.

Considering that the great majority
of all voters preferred the President to
McGovern at the time we conducted
our survey, Sargent Shriver's presence
on the ticket certainly has not hurt the
Democrats.

He offers another contrasting per-
sonality to the public in a year when
personal impressions, rather than a se-

These articles are based on inter-
views with 443 registered voters in
50 precincts of the 10 largest states.
The interviewing was done during
September by the following mem-
bers of The Washington Post staff
who did their field work in these
states: Massachusetts—David S.
Broder and Haynes Johnson; New
York—Broder, Johnson, Anthony As-
trachan and Stephen Isaacs; New
Jersey—Astrachan; Pennsylvania—
Broder and Mary Russell; Ohio—
Johnson; Michigan—Russell; Illinois
—William Chapman; Florida—George
Lardner Jr.; Texas—Broder; Cali-
fornia—Johnson and Leroy F. Aarons.
Their findings are not intended as a
prediction of the Nov. 7 presidential
election.

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characteristics that met The Post's
requirements for the voter survey.
He is not in any way responsible for,
or associated with, the findings of
The Post reporters.

rious discussion of the issues, seem to
appeal most to a politically-weary na-
tion.

NEXT: The Issues.

How the Voters View No. 2 Men

The Changing Image of Agnew

Here is a sampling of the way voters responded when asked by Washington Post reporters, "When you think of Spiro Agnew what is the first thing that comes to your mind?"

At first I thought he was too impetuous. I think he's come around some. He's learned to control himself. You have to think before you speak.

He's a solid man. He's a man that's got the world by the tail. He's got his eyes on the next election. A quiet man. He speaks only when he has to or when he's asked by the President.

I don't like him at all. No way. The Spiro of '76 scares me to death.

He should have been President. I'd rather see him than Nixon.

He sure is changing. He's the guy that does all the dirty work. But I think we ought to look further for someone to run for President.

Solid. I think he's much more intelligent than his speeches indicate. A very stable individual based on his work as governor. I think he's saying what Nixon didn't want to.

I only see him when he's golfing with Bob Hope. Don't know what else he's done.

He did the job assigned to him. I don't think he's radical. I don't like him. His idea of criticism is to make other people look ridiculous.

Drilled on personalities and not issues.

I resent his projecting the 1976 election into 1972.

Outspoken. Says a lot of what the common man thinks. We're the best country there is.

He's an outspoken man. He's one I'd vote for 100 times over. He's a real man for President—because of him I'm voting for Nixon.

I lived in Baltimore when he was governor. He liked people with money.

The new or the old? Represents all that needs to be changed in this country.

Big blustering bag of wind.

Has something on the ball—gets a little nasty—but you have to be sometimes.

I think he's funny—I like him.

He stood up against the press. I admire him.

I get sick to my stomach.

I don't think he lives in the same country as we do. He lives in a dream world. He sees the best of it, not the worst.

I like him very much—better than the whole caboodle. He's outspoken, he speaks his mind. He speaks beautifully. He doesn't fear anybody.

He's an actor playing a part.

Kennedy Aura Around Shriver

Here is the way voters responded when asked by reporters for The Washington Post, "When you think of Sargent Shriver, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?"

Comes from a good family—Kennedy.

Riding on the Kennedy name—not ability.

More of a performer-type politician. He puts on a show.

Like him. Like his smile. Very energetic. Peace Corps.

He had his 92-year-old mother on TV. He knows how to talk to people.

I have just a middle-of-the-road feeling. I'm not overly impressed. I was really impressed with Eagleton. He was bubbling over and ready to go.

Only thing I got against him is that he's a kin to the Kennedys.

Think he's good, but too critical of the President.

He's highly intellectual—very efficient.

I have no use for the Kennedy clan anymore—even though I voted for JFK.

Very little confidence—same type as Agnew. Shriver is more radical to the left than Agnew is to the right.

About the best McGovern could pick for a running mate.

He should have stuck to the Peace Corps.

Don't know that much about him. Not terribly im-

pressed from watching TV. Calling Nixon a war-monger. Politics is so dirty.

Conscientious, but weak so far. Leaning too heavily on Kennedy. Is this a sneaky move to bring Kennedy up for '76?

I like his attitude.

Frankly, he does a good job, but he just doesn't seem suitable.

His work in the past has been good.

He's a good man, but when I think of him I have doubts about replacing Eagleton.

I have no use for him. Where was he when he was in LBJ's cabinet. He didn't say anything about the war then.

I just hope he's not all talk—like McGovern.

He doesn't impress me at all. I know he was with the Peace Corps, but Shriver, the Kennedys, they're so wealthy. They don't work from 8 to 5. They don't understand the workingman and middle class problems.

Dynamic. Very strong. Very impressive.

Kennedy. I think he hid a lot of stuff about Chappaquiddick.

Excellent impression. I very much favored President Kennedy. Shriver was a figurehead in that administration. The Peace Corps was wonderful.

I like him. He's not a politician.

A go-getter. But I just don't like him.

Shriver Leads Agnew, 42-41,



Vice President Agnew raises hand of Sen. Howard Baker while campaigning in Nashville.

Return to the no rush

as Presidential Choice



Photos By Associated Press and United Press International

At right, Sargent Shriver and Rubber Workers head Peter Bonnarito at Miami union convention.