

Nixon Held Second-Lowest in Esteem

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Among voters with the longest memories, one President towers above all the rest. Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

It is an ironic commentary on the present, high standing of Richard Nixon in all the political polls that he is rated near the bottom among political figures that older Americans have admired the most in their lifetimes. Only Herbert Hoover is given a lower mark of esteem.

When voters over the age 50 were asked to list the leaders they have most admired, Roosevelt outdistances the field today just as he did during his four victorious presidential cam-

paigns. Of all older voters surveyed for this newspaper, FDR was chosen as the most admired by 38 per cent.

Next in terms of great Presidents were Dwight D. Eisenhower, 19 per cent; John F. Kennedy, 12 per cent,

The Older Voter—II

and Harry S. Truman, 6 per cent. Mr. Nixon drew only a 3 per cent figure. He was rated just one point above Hoover, whose fate it was to preside as President at the depths of the depression—and to be defeated in the first Roosevelt landslide.

Were Mr. Nixon a less well-known figure on the American political hori-

zon these findings would not be surprising.

But Mr. Nixon is hardly a new political face. For a quarter of a century he has been on the center stage of American public life. In five of the last six Republican national conventions, Mr. Nixon stepped forward to answer his party's call as a nominee, twice as a vice presidential candidate, three times for the presidency. That he is now rated so low among voters who have been most exposed to him is another indication that he does not command the highest public allegiance.

As we reported yesterday, Mr. Nixon is given a more positive rating than his

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Democratic opponent, George McGovern, in several significant areas. He is viewed as stronger, more statesmanlike, more competent, trustworthy and courageous, McGovern is seen as more inconsistent and disorganized.

Largely because of these feelings Mr. Nixon now leads Sen. McGovern by 57 to 30 per cent among older voters surveyed. The nationwide survey conducted for this newspaper by Hart Research Associates of Washington, D.C., is not designed to predict the presidential outcome two weeks from tomorrow. Because of the size of the sample—Hart interviewed 308 voters over the age 50 in selected locations throughout the country—the statistical margin of error could range up to 7 or 8 per cent, compared with 3 or 4 per cent for such national studies as the Gallup Poll.

In addition, as we indicated yesterday, the undecided vote in this significant element of the electorate is large. Mr. Nixon also appears to have problems because a growing number of these citizens regard him as being "deceptive." Added to these conditions is another finding that bears on the final presidential verdict: that among both undecided voters and Democrats strong displeasure is expressed about the way America is heading. By far more than 3 to 1 these voters think the country is seriously on the wrong track.

When analyzing the data from the older voters, two distinct constituencies emerge. Mr. Nixon does better in one, Sen. McGovern in the other.

The first group includes those between the ages of 50 and 60. Most of

This survey has been designed to measure why key groups within the electorate are voting in a certain way, and to study the deeper implications of this vote. This survey is not designed to predict the final outcome of the presidential election.

The data are based upon interviews conducted for The Washington Post by Hart Research Associates of Washington, D.C. This survey was conducted with 308 voters over the age of 50 in 19 selected locations throughout the United States. These locations represent in microcosm voters over the age of 50 of all regions and residential communities. All interviews were conducted by telephone between Oct. 11 and 15. The interviewing was conducted by professional members of the Hart Research interviewing staff. All respondents were registered voters who stated that they were certain to vote on Nov. 7. Other surveys on key groups in the American electorate will be conducted between now and the election.

them are still working, many are at the peak of their careers. They make more money and, generally speaking, face fewer problems. For example, of all voters in this group earning over \$10,000 a year, 80 per cent are between 50 and 60.

Mr. Nixon fares best among them.

The second group takes in those Americans over 61 years old. Many of them are retired. They include those on Social Security payments and fixed

incomes, as well as the truly elderly in nursing homes and retirement communities. They face the most severe problems in health care and hospital bills, rising inflation and rent.

McGovern fares best among them.

One way to measure the relative standing of the candidates is to look at the composition of the Nixon and McGovern supporters among these two constituencies.

Of all Nixon voters, 53 per cent were between 50 and 60. Of all McGovern voters, the same 53 per cent were 61 or older.

The retired voters alone make up 43 per cent of the entire Hart sample. They are one of the most ardently wooed group of voters in the nation. In the past they were the beneficiaries of the Roosevelt-era New Deal programs. They have been courted by Harry Truman and his Fair Deal, John Kennedy and his New Frontier, Lyndon Johnson and his Great Society, Hubert Humphrey and his promises to continue the social programs of his Democratic presidential predecessors.

Today, they stand at the center of a major political battleground in this election with the Nixon and McGovern camps vigorously vying for their support.

High Undecided Vote

As only one indication of how importantly the President views this group, six agencies of the federal government have published and are distributing—at the taxpayers' expense—more than seven million pamphlets extolling the Nixon record in creating a better life for elder Americans.

The publications, which praise the President personally, were mailed to senior citizen centers, elderly housing

projects, and nursing homes. They were also furnished to the Social Security Administration for distribution to its 1,000 district offices. The pamphlets were produced under White House direction.

Although the Hart survey shows Mr. Nixon leading in both groups of voters in their 50s and those 61 and older, he is running weakest among retired citizens. And among the retired an unusually high undecided vote is recorded. Of all voters interviewed who say they have not yet made up their minds, 38 per cent are retired.

This would seem to be another indication that the vote is still fluid, if not volatile.

The problems facing the elderly, and the desire to have the government to do more for those in need, run through the comments of these voters. Often they relate their problems to the presidential candidates and the issues.

Here are some of those retired voter comments.

A Brookline, Mass., woman:

"I just can't see voting for Nixon because I keep seeing all these young boys coming home crippled. I am old and crippled and I know what it's like."

Want Better Programs

An Ashboro, N.C., woman:

"They should give people over 65 better care and if that means money, then use it. They should allow tax breaks to support aged parents in good rest homes."

An Anderson, Ind., man:

"McGovern is sincere. He has all the people in mind, not just the rich."

A Dayton, Ohio, man:

"There should be some help for people who make under \$5,000. There

should be more specific programs for the under-privileged groups—the poor, the blacks. There should be better programs for education and health and so forth."

A Klamath Falls, Ore., woman:

"McGovern has the interest of the little people at heart."

The Nixon voters who are retired cite his qualifications and experience. If they are in better economic conditions today, they tend to give the President part of the credit.

"Nixon's done better than anyone else for me, said James M. Beck in Fairhope, Ala. "I have more money and it seems the country is in better shape."

As in other groups surveyed, Mr. Nixon also wins support because of his handling of foreign affairs, including Vietnam.

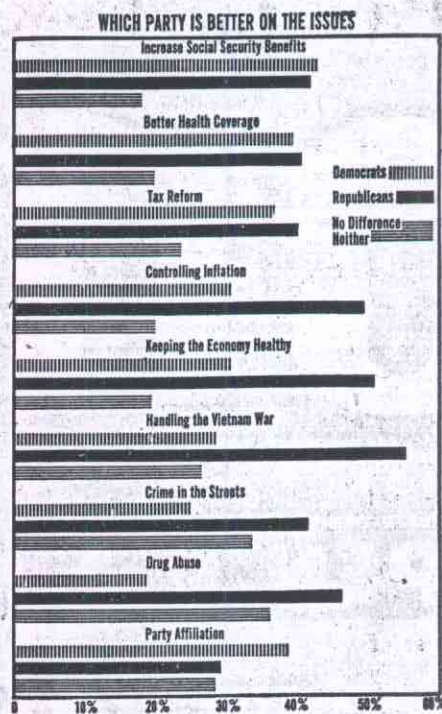
"Nixon had the guts to go to China and Russia and to go into Cambodia," was the way a retired voter in Baltimore put it.

But although the older voters, by 3 to 1 rate the war in Vietnam over any other major problem facing the nation today, interestingly the war is not the major reason people are voting for Mr. Nixon.

Political Paradox

A third of all Nixon voters said they think the President is doing a good job and deserves another term. Next among reasons offered for supporting Mr. Nixon is an anti-McGovern theme. The Democratic candidate is "too liberal" for 21 per cent of all older Nixon voters. Only slightly fewer gave Nixon's experience as their main reason. His efforts to end the war and bring home the troops were cited by only 10 per cent of these Nixon voters.

Among McGovern voters, the war is



given as the number one reason for going Democratic this fall. Ranked right behind the war is the feeling that it's time for a change.

McGovern voters offer other reasons for their support that do not turn up in the comments volunteered about the President. One out of every four McGovern voters mentioned such things as the belief that the Democratic candidate is for the working man, that he will do something about unemployment and jobs, and that he holds a better chance for tax reform.