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Poll-Election

SAN FRANCISCO AP -President Nixon's victory margin in his home state means the voters resisted changes they associated with Sen. George McGovern, says California Poll Director Mervin Field.

"There has been so much social ferment in the past 10 years, the public was not ready for more change," Field said in an interview Wednesday. "In McGovern, they saw an agent for change. He represented change when the public resisted it."

President Nixon swept the state with 56 per cent of the vote, compared with 42 per cent for McGovern. Field had predicted a 14 point margin for Nixon but said the identical spread in both cases means nothing.

"One of the biggest mistakes that could be made would be for the media to say the poll predicted the outcome. All it indicated was there were no changes in the final days of the campaign--no last-minute events," Field said.

"What we see is that as far as California is concerned, nothing much happened starting in October. The ebb and flow prior to that stabilized," he said.

He likened the election to a ninth poll taken by the voters themselves which followed the pattern of eight polls his organization took between August, 1971, and Nov. 1 this year.

"It was a presidential race characterized more by cynicism, frustration and fear and less by enthusiasm and optimism," he said.

"What we were getting in the polls was that the fear of McGovern was greater than the feelings of depression about Nixon."

Field said McGovern's surge in early 1972 was due to other Democratic candidates dropping out. "If the primary had been held a week earlier, we probably would have had a McGovern landslide," he said.

"But when McGovern went on nationwide television, California voters really saw him for the first time and they said, 'Hold the phone'. I think if the primary had been held a week later, McGovern would have lost."

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Field said the Democratic national convention was so visible on nationwide television that it gave the public a good look at “representative blocs who hadn't been in the process. “The great majority of American people could not identify with those groups, and they were more repelled than attracted to McGovern,” he said. “The Eagleton affair just dug the hole a little deeper.”