

# 2 UNWANTED ISSUES CONFRONTING FORD

NYTimes SEP 10 1976  
Survey Finds Carter Holds Edge  
Among Voters Who Link Ford to  
Economic Ills and Watergate  
SEP 10 1976

By ROBERT REINHOLD

Insofar as issues determine how people cast their votes for President, Gerald R. Ford's fate in November may well turn largely on how well he handles two unwanted issues he inherited from his discredited predecessor — the uncertain economy and the Watergate scandal.

The latest New York Times/CBS News survey, taken the week ended Sept. 5, finds the country remains deeply divided on these matters. And, at least for the moment, the balance seems to be tipped in favor of Jimmy Carter, Mr. Ford's Democratic challenger.

By all accounts, the Presidential race of 1976 represents a startling transformation in personalities and issues from 1972. Four years ago, the campaign was dominated by emotional issues of war and race, issues that embittered and divided both major parties.

### Parties Reverting to Form

This year, the new survey indicates, the contest has begun with Democrats and Republicans again uniting in opposing camps much the way they have since the days of Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, particularly on economic issues.

And with nearly three-quarters of the voters questioned by The Times and CBS News saying that the economy was either getting worse or not improving, the economy is an issue that is not likely to help the President, barring a major upturn before Election Day.

The poll found that Mr. Carter was leading by a nearly 2-to-1 margin among those who felt the economy was either static or worsening. It was only among the quarter of the voters who perceived an improving economy that Mr. Ford had the edge over his challenger.

What is more, despite some indications that economic conditions have improved since the beginning of the year, the poll showed few signs that the American electorate perceived the economy to be better. Last March, 40 percent told a previous survey by The Times and CBS News that the economy was improving, but since then the figure has dropped to 24 percent this month.

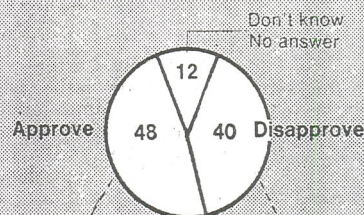
### Few Feel They're Better Off

Only about a third of the voters said their families were better off financially than a year ago. And although more people approved of Mr. Ford's handling of the economy than disapproved, Mr. Carter was seen as more capable.

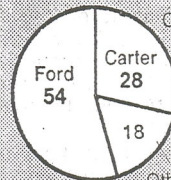
An unmistakable indication that partisan loyalty has re-emerged as a prime motivating force this year is the fact that the issues that "cut" most sharply between the two candidates are the ones that most clearly divide Democrats from Republicans. They are issues like national

### Selected Issues From Poll

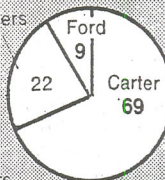
Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Ford has been handling the economy?



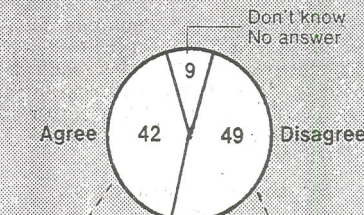
Respondents who approved supported:



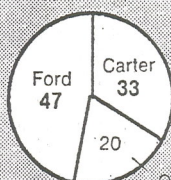
Respondents who disapproved supported:



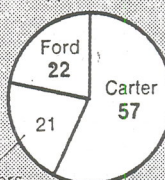
In the long run, it was probably right to pardon former President Richard Nixon.



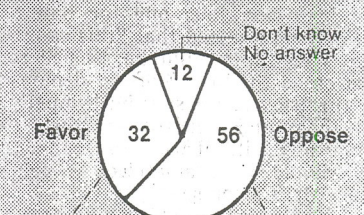
Respondents who agreed supported:



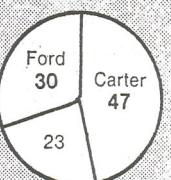
Respondents who disagreed supported:



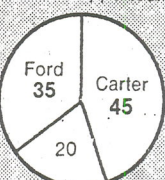
Do you favor an amendment to the Constitution which would make abortions illegal, or do you oppose such a change in the law?



Respondents who were in favor supported:



Respondents who were not in favor supported:





health insurance, inflation and unemployment, job guarantees, welfare and Watergate.

For example, the split is clear-cut on the matter of government-paid national health insurance, which is favored by Mr. Carter and Democratic leaders and opposed by Mr. Ford and his party. Voters approving the concept favored Mr. Carter by more than 2 to 1, while those against it preferred Mr. Ford by nearly the same edge.

#### Split on Health Insurance

This split is mainly a partisan phenomenon because Democratic voters surveyed heavily favored the health-insurance plan, while Republicans opposed it with equal force. Independents were almost evenly divided, with those favoring the health plan preferring Mr. Carter and those against it Mr. Ford.

This pattern held across a broad range of issues, and independents, so crucial to any Republican victory, were often very closely divided on the partisan issues.

One issue that clearly emerged from the survey as a nonpartisan one was abortion, which has been dogging Mr. Carter in recent days. The voters' position on a constitutional amendment to forbid abortion was unrelated either to their Ford-Carter choice or to their party preference. That is, those who opposed the amendment were just as likely to choose Mr. Carter as those who favored it, despite the resistance he has drawn from the Roman Catholic church on the issue.

Even among Roman Catholic voters, the issue does not seem to have damaged Mr. Carter yet. In fact, his margin over Mr. Ford was greater among Catholics who said they favored an anti-abortion amendment than among those who op-

posed it. However, the controversy erupted while the Times/CBS survey was in progress and its full impact on Mr. Carter's standing may not have been gauged.

The survey contains signs that Watergate remains a strong undercurrent against Mr. Ford. As they have since The Times/CBS survey first monitored the issue last May, more voters disapproved of the pardon Mr. Ford gave former President Richard M. Nixon than approved it, and this was clearly linked to the vote.

Although a majority (52 percent) felt that Watergate should not be a factor in November, the same percentage said that too many of Mr. Nixon's policies were being carried on.

All of this suggests perhaps that political memories are not short-lived. However honest he may be, however effective he may be in managing the economy, Mr. Ford appears to be saddled with the past, unable to shake the ghosts of Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon. Whether he can overcome Mr. Carter's lead may depend on his ability to portray himself as an independent and forceful leader.

NYTimes SEP 10 1976  
**1,703 Persons Queried**  
**In Times-CBS Survey**

The New York Times/CBS News survey is based on telephone interviews conducted the week ended Sept. 4 with 1,703 adult men and women across the continental United States.

The sample of telephone exchanges called was selected by a computer from a complete list of exchanges in the country. The exchanges were chosen in such a way to insure that each region of the country was represented in proportion to its number in the population.

The results have been weighted by selection probabilities related to household size and party affiliation and by race, sex, region, age and education. The weighting procedure is used as a safeguard against random variations for these factors in the sample.

In theory, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results in a sample of this size differ by no more than 2.5 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all Americans of voting age. For Democrats, Republicans or independents alone, the theoretical error margin is about 5 percentage points, and the error for smaller subgroups is somewhat larger.

These theoretical errors do not take into account a small margin of additional error resulting from the various practical difficulties in taking any survey of public opinion.

Assisting The Times in its 1976 survey coverage is Prof. Gary R. Orren of Harvard University.