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Gallup Poll Challenged

To the Editor:

The latest Gallup Poll showing a "Sharp Nixon Gain" [newsstory, Nov. 23] is an excellent example of drawing questionable conclusions from an obviously biased sample.

This survey "conducted Nov. 14 through Nov. 16, the week-end of massive antiwar demonstrations in Washington" showed the President gaining popularity among all major population groups, but especially "among residents of the East."

Large public demonstrations, by their very nature, require large numbers of people to be away from their homes.

With between one-quarter and a half-million people marching in Washington and away from their homes (mainly in the East it can be assumed), and with similar demonstrations occurring throughout the nation, it would be amazing if Gallup did not find a significant increase in the number of Nixon supporters among those who remained at home to answer doorbells (or phones) when the pollsters came to find out the opinions of the 1,400 households actually surveyed. (Would Gallup have taken the results of a survey of "the man in the street in Washington" (Nov. 14 through 16) as scientifically reflecting American opinion?)

This latest Gallup survey should take its place alongside the 1936 Literary Digest survey as classic examples of biased public opinion sampling.

It will be interesting to see if Vice President Agnew attacks the Gallup Poll for exercising undue influence in presenting a biased view of American opinion. PAUL DAVIDSON

New Brunswick, N. J.
Nov. 23, 1969

Agnew on Garrison

To the Editor:

One wonders whether Vice President Spiro Agnew, his speechwriter and his enraptured audience of Albanians on Nov. 20 have any idea of who William Lloyd Garrison actually was and what the circumstances were under which Garrison uttered those words with which Mr. Agnew concludes his denunciation of the Eastern press: "I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard."

Garrison was probably the most radical newspaper editor in the annals of American journalism. He was the leader of the extreme militant wing of the abolitionist movement and made a profession of denouncing the United States Government in his famous *Liberator*, founded in 1831. The first issue of that paper contained a ringing manifesto from which Mr. Agnew quoted. Among other inflammatory statements and acts that followed in Garrison's thirty-year campaign of civil and sometimes not so civil disobedience, he declared that the Constitution of the United States (because it recognized slavery as legal) was "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell"; and on the Fourth of July in 1854, at Framingham, Mass., he publicly burned the Constitution of the United States, crying: "So perish all compromises with tyranny!"

Extremism sometimes brings strange yokefellows together.

L. H. BUTTERFIELD
Cambridge, Mass., Nov. 21, 1969
The writer an historian, edited The Adams Papers.

Agrees With Agnew

To the Editor:

Another voice from the silent majority. Vice President Agnew is absolutely right in what he says about your paper, and I sincerely hope you do get the message.

HAYDEN PRESTON
Fort Lee, N. J., Nov. 22, 1969