

Yankelovich Says Polls May Create a 'Bandwagon'

By JACK ROSENTHAL

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 5—Political polls this fall may be having for the first time a "bandwagon effect" by reassuring Democrats who are already inclined to vote for President Nixon, Daniel Yankelovich, head of a major survey concern, told a House subcommittee today.

Historically, voters do not change their minds just to get on an apparent winner's bandwagon, he testified, "but there's always a first time, and 1972 may be that time."

The reason, he said, rests on the finding of repeated surveys that many Democrats have said that they prefer Mr. Nixon to Senator George McGovern, his Democratic opponent.

They are likely to have a strong natural reluctance to cross party lines when the time comes to vote, he said. "But when they see these polls that report Mr. Nixon has such massive appeal, it may well reassure them that it's not so terrible to switch party allegiance," he said.

Panel Weighs Legislation

Mr. Yankelovich testified before a House Administration subcommittee considering legislation to require political survey concerns to file public explanations of their methods within 72 hours after their polls are published.

Mr. Yankelovich heads a concern bearing his name that is conducting political surveys this fall for The New York Times and Time magazine.

As Mr. Yankelovich focused on "Nixon Democrats" in his testimony, the Gallup organiza-

tion issued new findings indicating that Mr. McGovern was winning back some of the potential defectors, particularly among Roman Catholics, unions and young voters. In each of these categories he reduced Mr. Nixon's lead by 21 points.

The findings, from a Gallup poll conducted Sept. 22 to 25, showed that 32 per cent of all Democrats surveyed would have voted for Mr. Nixon if the November election had just been held.

A parallel survey conducted a month earlier showed that 40 per cent of Democrats preferred Mr. Nixon. A Yankelovich survey conducted at about the same time found a 43 per cent defection rate.

The new Gallup figures were among detailed findings of a survey for which the overall result was issued Saturday. This showed a 28-point Nixon lead of 61 to 33, against an earlier margin of 34 points.

'Polls Not Predictions'

"Polls are not predictions," Mr. Yankelovich said today. "I know that when we say that, people say, 'That's a copout' and go right on treating polls as predictions. But the fact is that voters do change their minds."

And even with a bandwagon effect, he said, "when they walk into the voting booth, a lot of Democrats who now say they will vote for Nixon just won't be able to bring themselves to pull the Republican lever."

A different bandwagon effect was described to the subcommittee today by another witness, Lester Markel, former Sunday editor and associate editor of The New York Times

and author of "What You Don't Know Can Hurt You," a book on public opinion surveys.

There is no question that the polls do have such an effect on campaign contributors, he said. Such an effect was clear in Senator Hubert H. Humphrey's campaign in 1968 and is evident again in the McGovern campaign this year, he said.

Mr. Markel said that he was not against polls and in fact considered them vital to the political process. Too often, however, he said, "they are taken not as straws in the

wind, but as the wind itself."

Because polls are treated with such "public reverence," he expressed support for the bill to require disclosure of methods. It is sponsored by the subcommittee's chairman, Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan.

The new detailed Gallup findings showed that Mr. McGovern had narrowed Mr. Nixon's lead most significantly among Catholics and union members — two groups that are traditionally Democratic.

Among Catholic voters, the poll found a Nixon lead to 52 to 40. This 12-point spread compared with a 33-point lead at the end of August.

Among union members, the findings was a 10-point Nixon lead—52 to 42. This compared with a 31-point lead earlier.

The Gallup report also indicated a narrowing among voters aged 18 to 29. The newest finding was a six-point Nixon lead, 52 to 46. A month before, it was a 27-point lead.

The findings were drawn from home interviews with 1,168 registered voters in 300 communities across the country.