

Gallup Poll SF Chronicle OCT 9 1972

'Corruption' as Election Issue

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Although Senator George McGovern is hitting hard on the theme that the Nixon administration is corrupt, only a small percentage of the electorate believe corruption in government to be one of the nation's top problems.

A focal point of McGovern's attack is the Watergate incident, which concerns the alleged "bugging" of the Democratic party's headquarters in Washington. The latest survey shows that while half of all voters (52 per cent) say they have heard or read about this incident, only about a third are able to play back the key facts of the situation.

Among those who have heard or read about the incident, eight in ten say that Watergate is not a strong reason for voting for McGovern. Even among Democrats in the survey, opinion is 3 to 1 on the side that the incident is not a strong reason for voting for the Democratic nominee.

Furthermore, as revealed by the survey, McGovern can expect to win back few Democratic defectors — that is, Democrats who currently prefer Nixon — on the basis of the Watergate situation. Only one Democratic defector in twenty feels that the incident is a strong reason for voting for McGovern.

CONCERN

The issue of corruption at the present time appears to be of no great concern to voters, nor has it played a

major role in recent presidential election campaigns. The last time this issue was in the forefront was in the 1952 presidential campaign.

At the beginning of the fifties there were repeated charges of corruption and bribery in Washington. In 1952 the anti-Truman forces took up the cry of "Korea, Communism and Corruption." A survey of GOP county chairmen in 1952 showed corruption in Washington regarded as the most effective argument the GOP could use against the Democrats.

When voters in the latest survey are asked to indicate what they believe to be the nation's top problem, equal proportions of voters (27 per cent) name the Vietnam war and the high cost of living. Next most frequently named are international problems in general (by 10 per cent), drug use and abuse (by 9 per cent) and crime and lawlessness (by 8 percent).

Far down the list is "corruption in government" (named by 3 per cent in the latest survey and by about equal proportions of Republicans and Democrats).

CHANGE

Little change is noted in the public's top priorities between the latest survey, conducted in late September, and the previous survey, conducted in July.

This question was asked to measure the public's top concerns:

What do you think is the

most important problem facing this country today?

Following are the results of the latest audit:

Vietnam war	27%
"Inflation, high cost of living"	27
International problems (gen.)	10
Drug use, abuse	9
Crime/lawlessness	8
Pollution/the environment	4
Poverty, welfare	3
Corruption in government	3
Lack of national unity/purpose	2
Problems of youth	2
Moral problems/lack of religion	2
Miscellaneous / other responses	9
No opinion	3

109%**

*Includes "unemployment, "high taxes."
** Total exceeds 100 per cent since some persons named more than one problem.

The survey findings reported today are based on personal interviews conducted in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period September 22-25.

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