

Inside Report

Tide in Chicago for Nixon

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

CHICAGO—The continued decline of Sen. George McGovern among the white ethnic working class of Mayor Richard J. Daley's Chicago, showing no sign of reversal, threatens a massive landslide for President Nixon in vitally important Illinois.

Our interviews with 61 registered voters (31 Democrats, 20 independents, 10 Republicans) in two barometer blue-collar precincts on Chicago's mid-southwest side defy belief. In answer to a questionnaire drafted for us by pollster Oliver Quayle, these were the astonishing results: Nixon 47, McGovern 8, undecided 6.

THESE VOTERS, though less than pleased with Mr. Nixon's performance on Vietnam and the economy, simply cannot entertain the thought of George McGovern as President. Instead of rallying, McGovern seems still dropping.

"I kind of liked him when he was speaking his mind," a young salesman told us, "but now he's wishy-washy."

Such portents of disaster come from two precincts (selected for us by elections analyst Richard Scammon) whose voters are overwhelmingly white ethnic Catholics and preponderantly Democrats and labor union members. Moreover, they have recently proved a barometer of the entire state — having been carried narrowly by President Nixon in 1968 and overwhelmingly by Democratic Sen. Adlai Stevenson III in 1970.

Some Nixon voters here, however, may be a little shaky. Nearly half his supporters in these blue-collar neighborhoods feel he favors big business over the working man, about half disapprove

of bombing North Vietnam and many complain he has not ended the war as promised.

Nevertheless, Mr. Nixon is decidedly the lesser evil to them. A retired machinist who is a lifelong Democrat grumbled that the Nixon economic controls favor big business. "But McGovern gave Daley awful rough treatment at the convention," he added, "and I don't like that business of begging for peace." His choice: Nixon.

A young teacher told us McGovern "nearly lost my vote" because of his "poor move on Eagleton" but he decided to stick with him because of the war. McGovern did lose the vote of a 19 year old factory worker who said he just switched to Mr. Nixon: "The thing that really turned me off was the way McGovern treated his first vice president. He didn't level with him."

The result is a crisis in credibility. While McGovern argues that Mr. Nixon cannot be believed, the voters interviewed think otherwise. We tested their trust in eight candidates on this year's Illinois ballot with surprising results. Most trustworthy: Richard Nixon. Least trustworthy: Senator McGovern.

INDEED, these voters obviously think Mr. Nixon has performed satisfactorily as President, giving him a 78 percent performance rating — easily the highest given him in any interviews we have conducted the last four years.

Simultaneously, McGovern's massive attack on the Watergate caper and fishy Republican financing has flopped. None but a few hard-core McGovern voters took any credence in these charges.