

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 un-wanted issues he inherited from his dis-credited predecessor — the uncertain economy and the Watergate scandal. The latest New York Times/CBS News SUFVey, taken the week ended Sant 5

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 transforma-tion in personalities and issues from 1972. Four years ago, the campaign was domi-

Four years ago, the campaign was domi-nated 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 on Roosevelt, particularly economic issues

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.

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

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 elec-torate perceived the economy to be bet-ter. Last March, 40 percent told a previ-ous survey by The Times and CBS News that the economy was improving, but since then the figure has dropped to 24 percent this month percent this month.

## Few Feel They're Better Off

Only about a third of the voters said their families were better off financially

their families were better off financially than a year ago. And although more peo-ple approved of Mr. Ford's handling of the economy than disapproved, Mr. Car-ter was seen as more capable. An unmistakable indication that parti-san loyalty has re-emerged as a prime motivating force this year is the fact that the issues that "cut" most sharply be-tween the two candidates are the ones that most clearly divide Democrats from Republicans. They are issues like national



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

gate. 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 op-posed by Mr. Ford and his party. Voters approving the concept favored Mr. Carter by more than 2 to I, while those against it preferred Mr. Ford by nearly the same edge edge.

## Split on Health Insurance

This split is mainly a partisan phe-This split is mainly a partisan phe-nomenon because Democratic voters sur-veyed heavily favored the health-insur-ance plan, while Republicans opposed it with equal force. Independents were al-most 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.

issues.

One issue that clearly emerged from the survey as a nonpartisan one was aborthe survey as a nonpartisan one was abor-tion, 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. issue

Even among Roman Catholic voters, 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-

## NYLimes 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.

gion of the country was top-in proportion to its number in the population. The results have been weighted by selection probabilities related to house-hold 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 per-cent certainty that the overall results in a sample of this size differ by no more than 2.5 precentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all Americans of voting age. For Demo-crats, Republicans or independents alone, the theoretical error margin is about 5 percentage points, and the error for smaller subgroups is some-what larger.

These theoretical errors do not take into account a small margin of addi-tional error resulting from the various practical difficulties in taking any sur-

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

posed it. However, the controversy erupt-ed while the Times/CBS survey was in progress and its full impact on Mr. Car-

ter's standing may not have been gauged. The survey contains signs that Water-gate remains a strong undercurrent The survey contains signs that Water-gate 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 Presi-dent 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.

that too many of Mr. Nixon's policies were being carried on. All of this suggests perhaps that politi-cal memories are not short-lived. How-ever 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 Her-bert 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.