

THE CALIFORNIA POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL STATEWIDE SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION
ESTABLISHED AND OPERATED BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION SINCE 1946

San Francisco Headquarters
145 Montgomery Street
San Francisco 94104
392-5766

Mervin D. Field, Director
Robert Heyer, Editor

Los Angeles Office
3142 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles 90005
385-5259

Library
Field Research Center
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

COPYRIGHT 1966 BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION. FOR PUBLICATION BY SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Release #525

For release THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1966

HIGHLIGHTS OF VOTER OPINION TRENDS IN GOVERNOR, LT. GOVERNOR RACES

by Mervin D. Field

IMPORTANT: Contract for this service is subject to re-
vocation if publication or broadcast takes place before
release date or if contents of report are divulged to persons
outside of subscriber staff prior to release time.

As the candidates go through their final frenetic campaign paces, a look backward over the past 20 months highlights some of the significant events and trends in the campaign for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

1. First was the sudden, almost rocket-like, emergence of movie actor Ronald Reagan in late 1964 as a front running candidate for governor. His Goldwater speech marked him as a man with a big political potential.
2. Then, during the next 12 months, other logical Republican contenders considered making the race, and gingerly tested the political climate. One by one, in the face of the growing Reagan whirlwind, most of them backed off from the fray.
3. Among those left in the race was George Christopher who inherited most of the initial liberal/moderate anti-Reagan vote. This put him close to the top, but still wasn't enough to give him a lead over Reagan.
4. At mid-May, Christopher had not been able to cut into the solid bloc of conservative votes which were Reagan's from the start, and found that even some of the anti-Reagan votes were melting away. The former San Francisco mayor found himself a decided underdog with only three weeks to go.

This is the stage setting for Tuesday's Republican primary. Will the trends that were in evidence two weeks ago continue to bring Reagan victory, or will the Christopher campaign regain its momentum in the last hour?

Early Event Clues

The answer to these questions is in the hands of the voters now, but some clues may be seen in earlier events. In late 1964 and early 1965, public response to a Reagan candidacy was immediate and clear. More than a year ago a California Poll survey found Reagan the leading first choice as a possible gubernatorial candidate, topping such well-known political figures as Senator Thomas Kuchel, George Christopher, former Governor Goodwin Knight, ex-Assemblyman Joseph Shell (who gave Richard Nixon a hard battle in the 1962 gubernatorial primary), State School Superintendent Max Rafferty, and ex-U. S. Attorney Laughlin Waters.

(MORE)

Not only did Reagan lead this impressive field of possible candidates but when California Poll interviewers asked Republicans to choose between just Reagan and Kuchel for the governorship, the movie actor was preferred over California's senior U. S. Senator.

Conservative Backing

Reagan throughout the campaign has gotten his strongest support from Republicans who classify themselves as conservatives. About 50% of the California Republicans classify themselves this way. Approximately 35% say they are "middle-of-the-road," and 15% tag themselves as "liberal."

Most members of the middle-of-the-road/liberal wing of the Republican party initially reacted negatively to Reagan's candidacy and spread their votes among a number of the other hopefuls. Then, when many of the Republican possibilities withdrew or disavowed any intention to pursue the nomination, Christopher, as the only remaining candidate with any substantial accumulated political credentials, fell heir to many of the anti-Reagan votes. The California Poll's survey findings indicated that a good portion of the support Christopher gathered after the field had narrowed was due primarily to a coolness toward Reagan, rather than to a positive favoritism for Christopher.

Then, the second stage booster of the Reagan rocket fired off. In a poll taken early in May, the California Poll found that Reagan was not only strengthening his position among conservatives, but was winning away some of the support Christopher had garnered among the middle-of-the-road and liberal Republicans.

For example, in a February-May comparison, Reagan's original 16 percentage point edge over Christopher among conservatives grew to 27 percentage points. In February, Christopher had a 17 percentage point plurality over Reagan among the moderate/liberal GOP wing, but this lead narrowed to just two percentage points in May.

It is difficult to pin down whether this trend is attributable to a growing regard for Reagan or to a drop in strength of support for Christopher, but whatever the cause, the net result is a widening plurality for Reagan.

Electoral Arithmetic

The 1966 Republican campaign has highlighted a curious twist in the electoral arithmetic that any Republican desiring statewide office must face. It is the fact that to win he can lose only 10% of the Republican support, and he must also pick up better than 20% of the Democratic vote. The twist lies in the fact that for the past year the California Poll's surveys have shown that in this exercise Christopher, rather than Reagan, has a much better chance of achieving these levels of support come November. The most recent survey showed that Christopher had a 20 percentage point lead over Brown whereas Reagan outpolls the Governor in a simulation of November pairings by just 3 percentage points.

The reason for this strange situation is that Governor Brown's following among the Democratic electorate is at a low point, and Christopher capitalizes on this dissatisfaction with Brown to a much larger extent than Reagan does. Democrats at this point appear to be much more willing to vote for Christopher than for Reagan.

Furthermore, when paired against Brown, Christopher even gets slightly more Republican support than Reagan does apparently because the "won't ever vote for Reagan" GOP group is slightly larger than the "won't ever vote for Christopher" group.

(MORE)

The other candidates who entered the race, Los Angeles County Supervisor Warren Dorn, Marin County Business Executive William Patrick, and Management Consultant Joseph R. Maxwell, apparently have not been able materially to affect the chances of the two leading candidates. The mid-May California Poll report showed that these three candidates as a group had the support of only approximately 4% of the Republican rank and file.

There was some original speculation that Dorn's entry in the race would take away votes from Christopher in Southern California. However, poll data showed that this was not the case and if there was any disproportionate effect it was in the direction of taking away some conservative votes that might have gone to Reagan.

In sum, the latest poll report, which was completed three weeks before the primary when campaigning was beginning its final round, showed Reagan pulling ahead of Christopher by a margin of 13 percentage points. However, a sizeable segment of Republicans -- (19%) -- said they were undecided. Some of these obviously have a low interest in the election and probably won't vote. However, a large portion of this group are in the throes of conflict that has characterized the campaign. If they should divide heavily in favor of Christopher then he would still have a chance of pulling out as a winner. However, if this group swings the other way then a Reagan landslide is in the offing.

Democratic Gubernatorial

While there has been considerable fire between Governor Brown and his leading contender for the Democratic nomination, Los Angeles Mayor Samuel Yorty, this campaign has not really exercised the rank and file partisans. Even prior to his formal announcement as a candidate, Yorty was able to attract a good portion of the Democratic rank and file that were anti-Brown. However, as of mid-May he was not able to expand this initial beachhead, and the last California Poll report showed Brown with a two to one margin over Yorty.

Lieutenant Governor Race

For the first time in a number of years, this office has assumed great importance because Governor Brown has said that if he wins in November he will not seek another term as governor. There is also speculation that he might even stop down before finishing a third term, and a mid-term gubernatorial vacancy would automatically move the Lt. Governor into the number one spot, from where he would be rated a strong contender for the 1970 gubernatorial nomination.

Another possibility which makes the Lt. Governor spot this year even more important is that the Democrats could lose the governorship but win the lieutenant governor office, thus increasing the stature of the Democrat holding that seat.

(MORE)

Also, the incumbent, Lt. Governor Anderson, is not without his detractors and to some within the party he has been considered indecisive and lackluster. He was criticized for his performance during the August 1965 Watts Riots and many thought he was vulnerable. These considerations alone would have made the Lt. Governor race an important affair, but even more fat was thrown on the fire when Thomas Braden, President of the State Board of Education, and Lloyd Hand, former U.S. Chief of Protocol, entered the race. This brought to a boil some party rivalries that had been simmering for a long time.

Democratic Factions

Speculation is that Braden is backed by the Kennedy wing of the Democratic party. It has been rumored that Hand has the blessing of President Johnson, although the President has not publicly acknowledged this. Hand, originally a Texan, moved to California about five years ago, and has been closely allied with President Johnson since LBJ was vice-president.

Hand's entry is interpreted in some quarters as a move by the President to place one of his men in control of the important California state house should Governor Brown be offered a job in Washington. Another variation on this theme is the speculation that Jesse Unruh, a powerful Democratic leader who has often been in conflict with Governor Brown and other administration Democrats, has had a hand in bringing Lloyd Hand back to California.

On the basis of this speculation, the lieutenant governor's primary has taken on the earmarks of an advance skirmish between the two major factions shaping up the national Democratic party -- the Johnson wing versus the Kennedy wing.

California Poll surveys taken during the campaign indicate that Anderson is the odds-on favorite to win a third term as Lt. Governor, although the most recent California Poll showed that Braden's candidacy is on the upsurge. Still, Braden trailed Anderson by a large margin, and it would take some titanic late hour event for Anderson to be unseated in the primary.

Finch Leading

The Republican Lt. Governor race has attracted a number of candidates, but has been a relatively quiet affair. Robert Finch, former campaign manager for Richard Nixon, has managed to forge a coalition of the various GOP factions behind his candidacy and has a definite lead over three other candidates. However, significantly, two-thirds of the public has not made up their minds as late as three weeks prior to the election.