

The original documents are located in Box 65, folder “August 15, 1972 - H.R. Haldeman - Vietnam/Amnesty/National Defense” of the Robert Teeter Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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COMMITTEE FOR THE RE-ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

August 15, 1972

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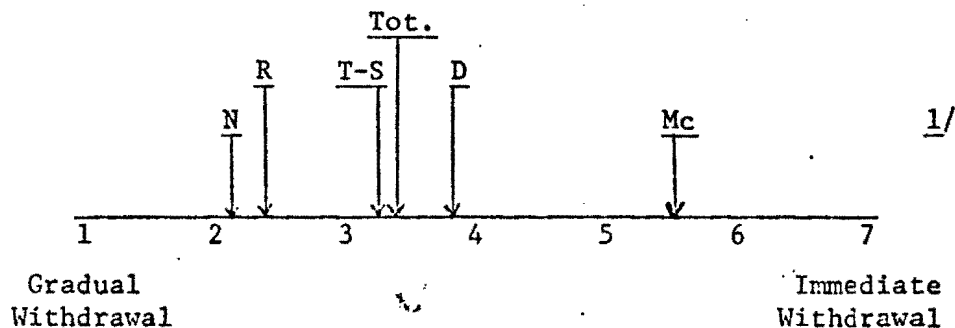
MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. H. R. HALDEMAN
 FROM: ROBERT M. TEETER
 SUBJECT: Vietnam/Amnesty/National Defense

This memorandum will outline the results of the second wave campaign polls as they pertain to Vietnam, amnesty, and national defense.

As we have noted in other memoranda, Vietnam is by far the single most important national issue in every geographical region of the country and with every demographic group. It is also the issue which has the most effect in determining how someone will vote for President.

Overall, the President receives an excellent rating on his ability to handle the Vietnam situation. Sixty-five percent give him positive ratings compared to 30% who rate him negatively. McGovern does not do as well with 42% rating him positively and 26% negatively.

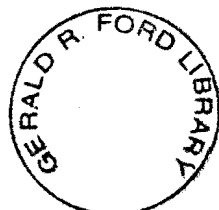
On the question of troop withdrawal from Vietnam, more voters lean toward a gradual withdrawal from Vietnam than favor immediate withdrawal as shown below. Age is the only demographic factor which has much effect on how an individual voter would feel.

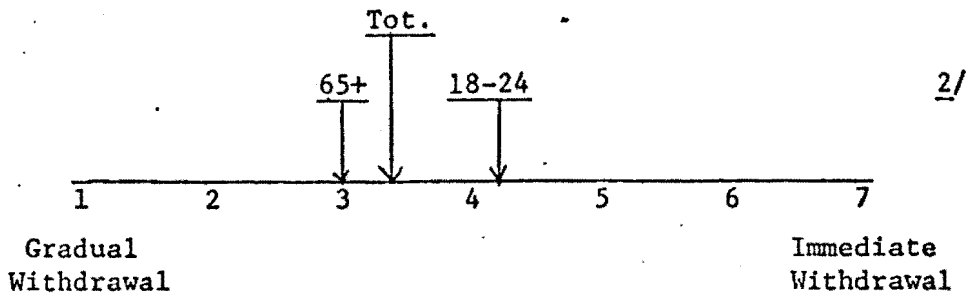


1/ Tot. = Total Voters
 T-S = Ticket-Splitters
 R = Republicans
 D = Democrats
 N = Total Rating Nixon
 Mc = Total Rating McGovern

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By CCB NARA, Date 2/8/2010



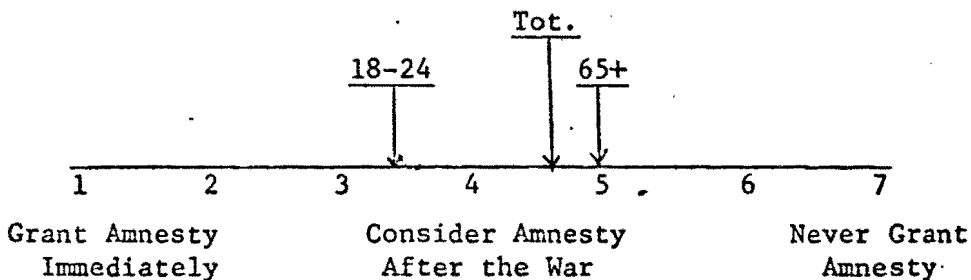
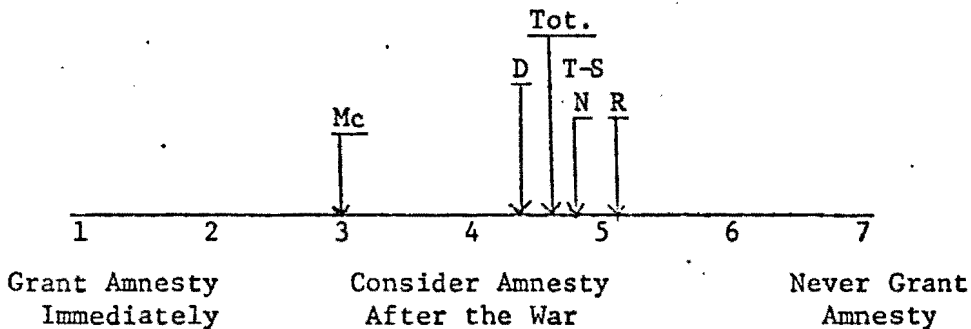


2/

The Presidential candidates are seen as having opposite views on the question of withdrawal; however, while the voters are in between the two candidates, they see the President's position as closer to their own view than McGovern's.

I think the data on amnesty is very significant. There is a high correlation between the amnesty question and the responses on Vietnam. Apparently, amnesty has become a "code word" for a set of opinions which correspond directly to beliefs about Vietnam withdrawal. It appears that it is becoming an integral part of the Vietnam issue rather than an independent issue.

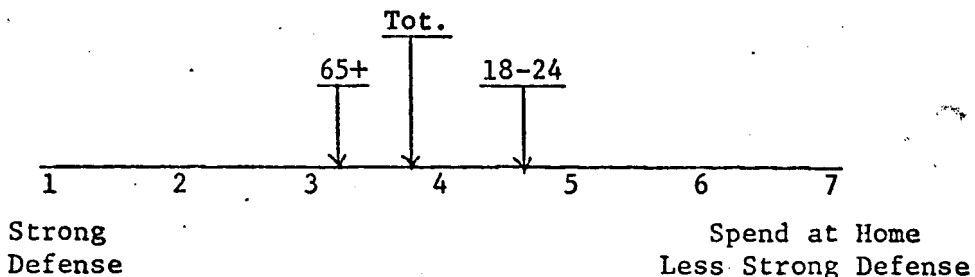
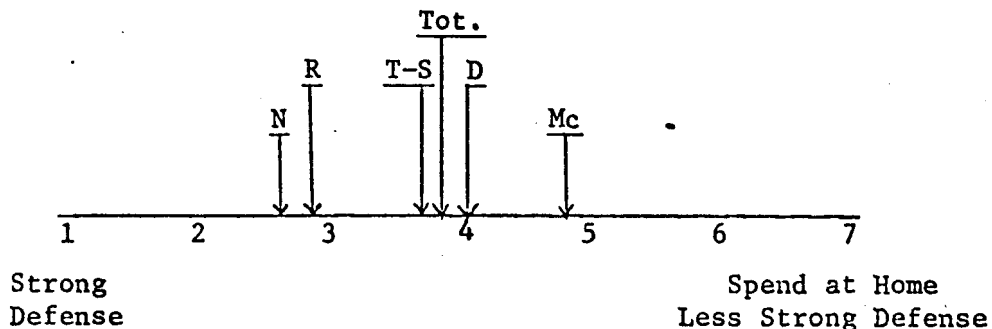
On amnesty, the President is perceived as having a position identical to that held by the public. McGovern's perceived position, on the other hand, is quite removed from the position of the voters. Age is the only variable having a large effect on the opinions regarding amnesty.



2/ Tot. = Total Voters
 65+ = Voters 65 years & over
 18-24 = Voters 18-24 years old



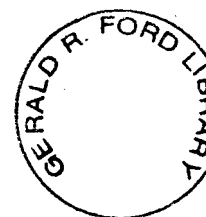
On the question of national defense the voters are fairly evenly split between those favoring a strong defense versus those favoring that we reorder our priorities and spend domestically even though it means a less strong national defense. Although they lean to the side of a strong defense, the voters place themselves about equidistance between Nixon and McGovern. Again age is important in the voter's position.



Thirty-seven percent of the voters think we should spend less on national defense while 39% think we should continue to spend about what we are now. However, of the 37% who feel we should spend less, 71% hold this opinion because they believe the Defense Department wastes tax dollars rather than because they believe we need less military strength.

Conclusions

1. Vietnam is by far the single most important issue in determining Presidential vote.
2. The President's handling of Vietnam is the single most important factor contributing to the President's high approval ratings and increased committed support. A large majority of voters are in favor of total withdrawal from Vietnam (not necessarily immediately) and perceive of the President withdrawing from Vietnam as fast as possible. To insure continued acceptance of our withdrawal plans we should continue to emphasize that very few or no American combat troops remain and that withdrawal of our air and sea support is conditional only on the release of our prisoners. Although voters want a reduction



in our involvement, they favor retention of some forces in Vietnam until the prisoners are released. We should not allow this issue to become clouded or fuzzy. We should make absolutely sure that the voters understand that the difference between the President's position and McGovern's position is that the President is going to withdraw totally after the prisoners are released while McGovern would withdraw immediately and hope the prisoners would be released.

3. Attitudes toward the President and ultimately the Nixon vote are more highly correlated with whether or not voters think he has done a good job of handling the Vietnam problem than anything else, except past voting behavior. This is truly the gut issue in the campaign.

4. As the President is seen handling the Vietnam situation well and as we have a definite advantage over McGovern on this issue, we should continue to emphasize Vietnam. We should be careful not to overstate our accomplishments because a substantial proportion of voters do not believe we have been completely truthful and forthright about Vietnam. Young voters are especially sensitive to this.

5. While the President's perceived position on amnesty is right in line with the voters, amnesty is probably going to become a more important issue during the campaign and the President will have to address himself to it more specifically than he has. His position should be just as it is now perceived to be, fairly hard but allowing for amnesty under some conditions after the war is over. These conditions might include amnesty for C.O.'s and draft dodgers but require public service. While we did not measure it directly, I suspect there is some difference of attitudes for the C.O.'s and draft dodgers versus deserters. This is an issue we should check carefully in Wave Three and continue to follow.

The President should be very careful on handling the defense spending and reordering of priorities issues. There appears to be some ground for McGovern to gain on this issue. Many voters find the "reordering of priorities" and "doing more at home" appeals very attractive, particularly when their concern over high taxes is rising.

There are two points we should emphasize with regards to national defense. First, whenever the President discusses it he should explain and emphasize that a strong national defense is a means to peace not just that it is a means for us to be the strongest nation in the world or to prevent us from becoming a second-rate power. There is strong support for the idea that a strong national defense is in fact a means to peace and we should always tie defense spending to that idea.

Secondly, some public hard-nosed action directed at duplication and waste in the Defense Department would be most useful along with more publicity of the Administration's actions to make the Defense Department more efficient. Regardless of whatever actions we may have taken, there is continued wide-spread suspicion of the military industrial complex.

~~CONFIDENTIAL/EYES ONLY~~

