

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE ELECTION

By ELMO ROPER

IN A nationwide survey conducted shortly after President Eisenhower's abdominal operation we found that his most recent illness has cost him comparatively few votes. The net effect has been to reduce the number of people who say they are intending to vote for him between three and four percentage points. Forty-one per cent now plan to vote for Eisenhower, 26 per cent plan to vote against him, and 33 aren't sure where they stand or don't intend to vote.

However, this does not mean people are taking the President's illnesses lightly. Many are worried about electing a President whose health they can't feel sure about. With most this worry is not great enough to cause them to say they won't vote for him, but their concern shows up in their answers to this question: "Suppose Eisenhower was a friend of yours and asked for your personal advice. In light of both his heart attack and operation and what the doctors say about them as well as what you have read or heard do you think you would advise him to run or not to run?"

Forty-three per cent said they would advise him not to run, as against 29 per cent who would advise him to run. Nor were all these people who would advise him not to run Democrats. A quarter of the Republicans would personally advise him not to run, and another quarter aren't sure what they'd advise.

This large number of people who say they could not as a friend advise President Eisenhower to run again is undoubtedly a deep tribute to the affection people feel for Eisenhower the man and to their concern for his personal welfare and happiness. But it also means that a good many people are faced with the prospect of voting for a man they feel from a personal point of view should not be running at all.

When people were asked to react to separate aspects of the health situation a good deal of difference of opinion turned up, and so did some inconsistencies in what people said they believed.

Although there is disagreement over

the seriousness of Eisenhower's latest illness most people seem to have some awareness of the risk presented by the President's uncertain health. They have a high respect for the word of Eisenhower's doctors; yet they harbor more doubts about his health than the doctors have expressed. They are also willing to take Eisenhower's word on his own health; yet most people were unwilling, at least in June, to go along with his own later statement about the way he felt.

On the surface the public's attitude about Eisenhower's health is optimistic. But there is an undertone of uneasiness, which in some quarters becomes outright foreboding. Since Eisenhower is running for reelection two things become important: how

people conceive of the function of the President and their feelings about the probable Vice President, Richard Nixon.

On the first people do not go along with the theory that "half of Ike is better than all of anyone else." Republicans themselves, who take a strong pro-Eisenhower position on most other aspects of the health question, are split down the middle over this. Presumably most of them feel this choice will not have to be made. If it did there is no assurance it would be made in Eisenhower's favor.

AS FOR Nixon the picture revealed by our survey is that of a man who is admired by many but also distrusted by many, too, when they stack him up against the requirements of the Presidency. When we asked people what they would say about Nixon among a group of friends 39 per cent described him in favorable terms and 27 per cent talked about him in a negative way. Twelve per cent were non-committal and 22 per cent could not or did not answer the question.

Without doubt Nixon is controver-

Ever since President Eisenhower's operation several weeks ago, people have been expressing different ideas on how they felt about the President's health. We've heard many opinions, as I'm sure you have. Here are a few and we wonder, for each, do you personally tend to agree or disagree?

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know or no answer
It was not too serious an operation and with a few weeks' rest President Eisenhower will be as well as ever.	48%	36%	16%
If the President's opponents try to make a big thing of Eisenhower's health they'll only succeed in making people angry.	52	28	20
Either the operation alone or the heart trouble alone would not be too serious, but both together are bound to have a lasting effect on Eisenhower's strength.	51	33	16
If both the doctors and Eisenhower himself say he is all right, then I'm not worried.	59	27	14
The doctors and other people around Eisenhower are trying to cover up the fact that he really isn't a well man.	23	58	19
Eisenhower is so valuable that he should be President even if he could only attend to major matters and would have to count on other people to do the rest.	28	60	12
His heart must be in good condition to stand up under the operation—he's probably in better shape to run now than before.	35	44	21
I don't think the operation means much. His enemies are just trying to make a lot out of nothing.	39	41	20

Now here is a list of phrases people have used to describe Nixon. Would you go down the list and call off all those you think are true?

	Total	Democrats	Republi- cans	Independ- ents
Favorable phrases				
Loyal to Eisenhower's policies	47%	38%	68%	44%
Honest and sincere	41	29	66	37
Very intelligent	35	27	54	34
Has excellent judgment	18	10	34	14
A real statesman	16	10	28	13
For the common man	13	7	23	13
Unfavorable phrases				
Too young and inexperienced	19	24	13	23
Too much out for himself	15	22	7	13
Too much of a politician	15	20	8	16
Says anything for votes	13	20	5	14
Tries to slip things over	8	12	3	6
Don't know or no answer	16	20	9	18

sial. The answers to another question spell out these differing views of the Vice President (see chart above)

It is clear that Nixon is liked more than he is disliked. His greatest asset is that he is regarded as loyal to Eisenhower's policies and is in general "Ike's man." (However, this description when coming from people not entirely sympathetic to Eisenhower's policies is a dubious compliment.) There is also a good deal of respect for his intelligence. While many think of him as "sincere" this is far from a universal conviction. The fact is that there is a strong undercurrent of suspicion that he is an overshrewd politician and an opportunist, more concerned with his own future than that of his country. His youth also tends to work against him.

What effect do these varying opinions of Nixon have when he is considered as a possible President? On his own he probably could not be elected. When we asked people whether in case Nixon were the Republican candidate for President they would be likely to vote for him or for the Democratic candidate the results were (see chart below).

	Total	North- east	Mid- west	South	Far West
Would vote for Nixon	30%	35%	36%	23%	26%
Would vote for Democrat	39	34	39	40	44
Depends on Democratic candidate	15	16	11	17	15
Would not vote if Nixon were a candidate	3	2	2	5	3
Don't know	13	13	12	15	12

In only one area of the country, the Northeast, does Nixon win over his hypothetical Democratic opponent—and then by a hairsbreadth. He is weakest in the Far West—where he is best known.

However, should optimism about the President's health prevail it does not look as if antagonism to Nixon will swing any large number of votes away from Eisenhower. When we asked those who were not already intending to vote for Eisenhower what might make them decide to vote for him

only 4 per cent said: "If the Republicans do not nominate Nixon for Vice President." But if apprehension over Eisenhower heightens Democratic prospects will increase.

Interviewing of a cross-section of the public had been completed before Harold Stassen's dramatic boom for Governor Christian Herter had been launched. However, in our questioning about possible Republican candidates it was disclosed that Massachusetts's Governor was almost unknown to the voting public and apparently would neither have added to nor subtracted any considerable number of votes from the Eisenhower ticket.

The debate about Eisenhower's physical condition is taking place against the background of people's memory that four years ago we were involved in a seemingly endless war that drained the country's energies but gave few any feeling of purpose or accomplishment. Although peace has been restored we have skirted war twice since then, and people know how swiftly the Communists could shift from the smiles of coexistence to the glare of cold—or hot—war. "Keeping the peace" stood head and

happens "beyond the water's edge." With most people it seems to be peace first and containment second. What implications this might have on policies the public would be willing to back it's hard to say. One thing is clear: We have come a long way from the days when our noses were so buried in our own affairs we hardly knew the outside world existed. That outside world has impinged for good on most people's consciousness.

With the prosperity issue we are back on more familiar ground. The Democrats used the economic issue as an anchor of their power for twenty years. In 1952 it did not hold firm, and if prosperity is maintained they will have a hard time making this issue work their way in 1956. If it becomes threatened it will be a different story.

The fourth major issue is an old one that has won new importance. In 1948 Harry Truman went far enough out on the limb of civil rights to drive the Southern wing of his party out onto a third party limb of their own. Yet the nation as a whole never worked up any fiery interest over this question. This year, however, the aftermath of the Supreme Court's 1953 school segregation decision has aroused the country to the extent that now nearly one third of the people are personally concerned over this issue. Some of these people are against, some are for segregation. Some of the excitement, no doubt, is harmful to the forces of growth and change. But it is at least a striking contrast to the apathy which for so many years has greeted the submergence of some 17,000,000 of our people in a second-class citizenship.

As the party conventions approach the nation's deepest concern is the keeping of the peace. As a symbol of peace and unity President Eisenhower has a head start as the man to lead the country for four more years. But his heart condition coupled with his operation this spring has disturbed many people. Eleven years ago a President died in office, and there were many people then who were uneasy about an approach to the Presidency so desperate as to drive a man to the limits of his mortal endurance. There are a good many people today uneasy over the issue of a President's health. The nation is hopeful, but not entirely at ease over what the next four years may bring. Eisenhower the man is as popular as ever.

FOUR NATIONAL ISSUES PEOPLE ARE PERSONALLY MOST CONCERNED ABOUT

Keeping the country at peace	49%
Preventing Russia from spreading her influence	33
Keeping the country prosperous	32
The question of civil rights and segregation for Negroes	31

The Urbanity of Stevens



—Sylvia Salmi.

Wallace Stevens—"singer of suburban life."

By ELIZABETH GREEN

ONE of the fascinating questions about the life and work of Wallace Stevens concerns the connection between his successful business career, as vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, and his poems. At first glance it seems incredible that these particular poems, so continuously concerned with the imagination, so full of references to painting and sculpture and music, to faraway places and figures of fantasy, should have been written by a man who spent his days dealing with the intricacies of insurance law. But a closer reading of his work suggests that there is no essential paradox after all. Stevens is a man completely at home in his environment; he lives in modern city society without any impulse to overturn or to escape. He is, indeed, the singer of suburban life.

Partly because some of his well-known early poems picture the tropical luxuriance of Cuba or Florida or Mexico, relatively little attention has been paid to the fact that he habitually refers to the New England landscape in writing about the nature of reality. Still less noticed is the fact that he describes the kind of natural world enjoyed by the man who lives in a town or suburb—who has a lawn on which crickets sing and rabbits sit at dusk, a hedge of lilac and dogwood, a park nearby where he can watch the swans on the lake, and a summer vacation when he can go abroad or get to

the New Hampshire hills or the coast of Maine.

The man of imagination, the one who both sees and perceives, is frequently, in Stevens's poetry, sitting "here in his house and in his room, in his chair," and looking out a window.

It is someone walking rapidly in the street.

The reader by the window has finished his book.

And tells the hour by the lateness of the sounds.

The poet may be listening to the steps of the milkman or to the rain, as he sits beside

The window, close to the ramshackle spout in which
The rain falls with a ramshackle sound.

Lakes, which are "more reasonable than oceans," and parks figure largely in Stevens's landscapes. That magnificent group of marble horses which is the central symbol of "Owl's Clover" shows one kind of insight a city dweller can get by frequenting a park. Or he may catch a glimpse of truth on a family stroll.

He walked with his year-old boy
on his shoulder.

The sun shone and the dog barked
and the baby slept.

The abstract was suddenly there
and gone again.

The Negroes were playing football
in the park.

Might it have been the chance to alternate moderate exercise and rest, so suitable for a man at a desk all day, that made the lake a favorite symbol for Stevens? As he suggests in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," perhaps

The truth depends on a walk
around a lake,

A composing as the body tires, a
stop
To see hepatica. . . .

Stevens's poetry is full of references to birds. Even casual readers of modern verse are apt to remember the splendid image which concludes "Sunday Morning":

And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they
sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

Except for the bantams in pinewoods which have so fascinated anthologists and critics, nearly all the birds, swooping, chittering, silhouetted on a bare branch, are those familiar to anyone living in a town or suburb anywhere in the northeastern United States. Stevens delights in crows and blackbirds, sparrows and bluejays, robins and catbirds—the friendly creatures who have accommodated themselves to city life.

SIMILARLY he makes use of locusts, crickets, fireflies, rabbits, squirrels, cats. He sketches a fine suburban scene in order to offer ironic sympathy to the man (was he a business executive?) who, in the midst of the splendor of spring,

Sighed in the evening that he lived
Without ideas in a land without
ideas.

To demonstrate the "shift in realities" which confronts the perceptive observer Stevens points out the window.

It was at the time, the place, of
nougats.

There the dogwoods, the white
ones and the pink ones,
Bloomed in sheets, as they bloom,
and the girl,
A pink girl took a white dog walking.

In writing of city life Stevens differs from most of the other major poets of the twentieth century. He does not make the city itself a central symbol

The Poet Who Lived with His Words

For Wallace Stevens

By Samuel French Morse

YOU loved the morning always, and its blue
Paraphernalia, grackles gold with dew
More gold than bronze, and purple on the phlox
In the high grass, rose-redness of the rocks
Streaked gray and yellow in a painter's light:
The air as clear as change composing sight
To your identity, the light seen through
To the pure words of it, imagined, true.