

The election eye . . .

Presidential rankings narrow — as expected

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It's no surprise to realize that the presidential race between President Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan shapes up as a humdinger, despite earlier polls.

Those who follow political news recall that only a month ago, national polls gave Reagan a thumping 25 percent edge. Only last week, however, the Associated Press-ABC poll showed the gap has been narrowed to only 7 percent. When it is realized there is a 3-4 percent error factor, the margin appears even slimmer.

The latest poll shows Reagan at 39 percent, Carter 32 and John Anderson at only 6, with the remainder undecided.

This writer predicted a month ago the polls would show dramatic reversals after President Carter was nominated for re-election. He observed Sen. Kennedy's challenge was more an of an exaggeration by the news media because Carter had his delegates and there was no way they would change their minds.

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The reversal has now taken place, but the hard campaign leading to the Nov. 4 general election still lies ahead. After Carter and Reagan tangle in head-to-head debates and the political records of the two are fully exposed, voters be better able to judge the merits of the two contenders.

Thus, voters should not be surprised if the polls show Carter has forged to the front. This also could mean little because conditions and the political vagaries could give Reagan the lead again.

Just last November, the ABC-Harris poll showed Carter had forged into the front over Reagan 52-45. Only two months earlier Reagan held the lead 50-45. Last May, this same poll showed Reagan with 39 percent of the vote, Carter 33 percent and Anderson 29 percent.

It's now amusing to see that Sen. Ted Kennedy held a 2-1 lead over Carter and also an edge over Reagan. How times do change.

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The political pulse

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Perhaps the most significant development is the virtual collapse of Anderson as a prime contender. At one time he was close to Carter but the latest poll indicates he will be little more than a nuisance contender. Yet, that 6 or 7 percent can become important if the election is extremely close, tipping the scale in some big states or even throwing the contest into the House of Representatives.

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Senate Minority Leader Cy C. Chase's quoted statements that Carter's nomination will harm Sen. Frank Church can be disregarded.

Chase, who led the Idaho Kennedy forces at the Democratic National Convention, proved to be a rather sore loser. Even after Carter won as expected, Chase expressed doubt he would support the ticket.

In the final balloting on the nomination, Idaho voted 9 for Carter, 7 for Kennedy and one abstained. Of the four uncommitted delegates, only Joan Car-

tan, the 18-year-old Idaho Falls delegate who attracted considerable attention at the convention because of her youthful enthusiasm, switched to Carter

This was short of the percentage Carter received in Idaho in the May presidential primary. This totaled 31,983, or 62 percent, for Carter; only 11,148, or 22 percent, for Kennedy and 5,824, or 12 percent, undecided or uncommitted. On this basis, Carter should have received at least 10 and possibly 11 of the votes from the 17-member Idaho delegation.

Chase also took a strong stand against Gov. John V. Evans who led the successful Carter forces and was his Idaho campaign committee chairman.

How Chase can arrive at the deduction that Carter is a hindrance is indeed puzzling. There

is little question the liberal Kennedy would do far more poorly than Carter in Idaho.

The observation of Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus, a former Idaho governor and an astute political observer, is to the point. He was quoted as saying "Cy Chase has never been the clearest thinker in the world in political predictions."

It might be observed that Andrus has increasingly become a factor in Idaho politics. Extremely popular, he could succeed Evans as governor after another term or two to give the Democrats a stranglehold on the governor's chairman for many more years. He also may be prevailed on to run against Sen. James A. McClure in 1984, although the Washington scene is not exactly to Andrus' liking.