

The national scene . . .

# Carter hike hints he may be tough to beat

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It has been interesting to  
watch as the predicted rise of  
President Carter is beginning to  
unfold.

Any Democrat or Republican  
who thinks the Georgian is going  
to be a pushover in the 1980  
elections may find a surprise.  
This is not to say he can't be  
beat, but when it comes to voting  
out an elected incumbent  
president, the American voters  
have shown a deep reluctance.

Still ahead are the primaries  
which will test the dozen can-  
didates now in the field, or ex-  
pected to run. These include  
Carter, Sen. Ted Kennedy, and  
California Gov. Jerry Brown on  
the Democratic side and almost  
a dozen for the Republicans.

As has been the case in past  
years, the primaries will force a  
number of candidates, par-  
ticularly the challengers on the  
opposite party — the  
Republicans in this case — to  
the sidelines.

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This writer observed last  
winter and spring, when Carter  
hit low points in polls that the  
pollsters would begin to do a  
flipflop as the 1980 election  
approaches. It is still more than  
a year away and the so-called  
political experts are already  
beginning to change their tune.

Kennedy didn't do nearly as  
well as expected in Florida,  
where Carter won the majority  
of candidates, although the  
meaning of this appears vague.

In fact, there are many who  
believe that when it comes to  
the actual showdown, Kennedy  
may not announce. This, of  
course will depend on the  
primaries, but Carter appears

to have shown keen talent for  
winning delegates, such as hap-  
pened in 1976.

Even though there is a  
movement in Idaho under Rep.  
Steven Scanlin, D-Caldwell, to  
form a Kennedy for President  
Committee in Idaho, most high  
Democratic leaders back  
Carter. His conservative image  
and high moral character would  
likely easily win him the  
Democratic nomination in May  
in Idaho, regardless of other  
factors.

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It was interesting to note that  
the latest polls show a Carter  
surge, which gives an indication  
of things to come.

The ABC-Harris polls last  
week revealed that Carter, who  
was trailing Republican Ronald  
Reagan 50-45 in early Sep-  
tember, now is ahead 52-45.

The polls still place Kennedy  
ahead of Reagan 2-1, but that  
could be meaningless, since he  
likely won't be the Democratic  
nominee, regardless of the national  
news to the contrary.

Perhaps one of the most sig-  
nificant developments is that the  
polls show that in the West,  
where Carter has been the  
weakest, he now leads Regan by  
52-45 percent.

Also last week, the Associated  
Press-NBC poll showed a shift  
in Carter's favor. He marked a  
5 percent gain, with 24 percent  
thinking his work is good, 50  
percent rating him fair, and  
only 24 percent poor. Two per-  
cent were undecided. However,  
that huge 50 percent ranking  
him fair could mean a plus in his  
favor when pitted against say,  
Reagan or Connally. Some  
could say it's a 75 percent rating  
in his favor, and certainly not  
against him.

It must be remembered that  
Carter sits in the White House  
and he knows how to use politi-  
cal patronage and power.

Maybe Carter won't win re-  
election, but don't be too sure.

In many ways the Carter si-  
tuation resembles that of  
President Harry Truman in  
1948. History could repeat.