

The original documents are located in Box 65, folder “August 11, 1972 - H.R. Haldeman - Abortion” 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

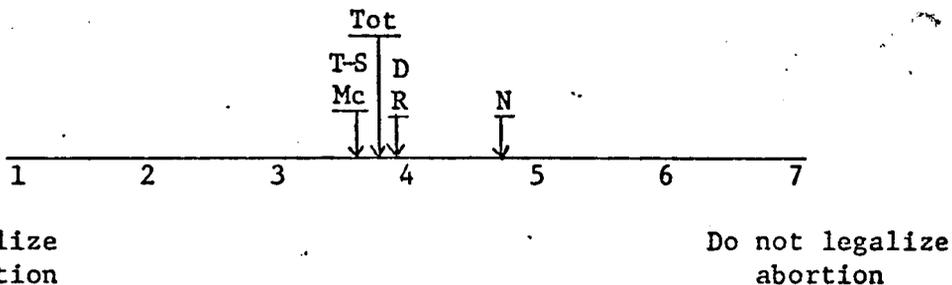
August 11, 1972

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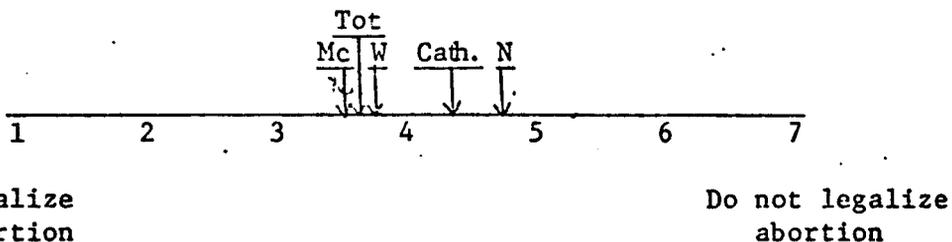
MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. H. R. HALDEMAN
 FROM: ROBERT M. TEETER
 SUBJECT: Abortion

As requested, this memorandum will outline the results of the second wave of campaign polls as it relates to abortion:

The President's perceived position on abortion is somewhat removed from the view held by the total electorate. On the other hand, McGovern's position is in the center of the public view.



As shown in the above chart, the President's current position indicates there is some possibility of losing some votes on this issue. This is especially true with women voters who position McGovern much closer to their own view than Nixon. The notion that Catholic voters are overwhelmingly opposed to abortion is not borne out by this data. Forty-eight percent of the Catholics are opposed to abortion while 41% would leave the matter to be decided by a woman and her doctor. The Nixon position is somewhat closer to all Catholic voters than the McGovern position, while McGovern is more in line with women.



Determined to be an
 Administrative Marking

By CCG NARA, Date 2/8/2016



The argument has been made that those who are opposed to abortion, particularly Catholics, are much more intense in their feelings on the issue and that it is more of a vote determining issue with them than it is with the pro-abortion people. While we did not measure this directly, the data indicates that this conclusion is not accurate.

The idea that the President's increased support among Catholics results directly from his abortion stand is also not supported by the data. Catholic support of the President appears to have been growing for some time and was also strong in January prior to his letter to Cardinal Cooke.

Conclusions

The data leads us to the following conclusions:

1. The President's position is certainly not going to attract any new voters and may be in fact costing him some support he might otherwise have, particularly among women.
2. While more Catholics are opposed to liberalized abortion than support it, the margin is close.
3. My recommendation is that the President avoid this issue if possible unless it becomes absolutely necessary. If it does become necessary, I think he should take the position that it is a matter to be decided by each state and not reiterate his personal position. The alternative to this would be for him to moderate his stand which might help him with women and younger voters, but not soften it to a point where he jeopardizes his advantage with some Catholics.

