



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

RECEIVED  
JUL 12 1958  
GENERAL FILES

*Person  
Has this been  
seen by White House?*  
April 14, 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McELROY

The attached survey by <sup>x</sup> Claude Robinson's Public Opinion Index has some points of interest. It was made right after Sputnik I among 1000 adults in the general public and 117 newspaper editors, and supplemented with additional calls after our Explorer.

X04139-E

X07146-4-1

Impact of Sputnik

The news of Sputnik's launching was known to 95% of the public, but 40% noted the news and dismissed it without serious thought as to what it might mean to them and their country.

After Sputnik, 80% thought we were "at least even" with the Soviets or would "catch up before long"; editors had a more alarmed point of view.

Placing of the Blame

The launching of Sputnik had little if any effect on the prestige of the Eisenhower administration. The September poll indicated that this popularity had already fallen due to rising prices and high taxes, and fell no further as a result of Sputnik.

X07133-8-1

The blame for our missile lag was attributed to the following, in order:

X07139-6-2

1. Our schools have placed too little stress on science. (69%)
2. We Americans have been too smug and complacent about our national strength. (67%)
3. There's been too much rivalry between the Army, Navy and Air Force. (63%)
4. We have failed to give scientists the salaries and recognition their importance deserves. (61%)

Only minorities blame:

5. Congress has been too economy-minded. (41%)

6. The Eisenhower Administration failed to supply the leadership needed. (39%)

The Solution to the Problem

People felt the need for "getting going" but were less clear on what should be done.

The public is in favor of additional defense spending, but are most reluctant to pay for it. As between balancing the budget or going farther into debt, 53% side with the balanced budget as against 34% with the added debt.

Majorities do not want to cut aid to farmers or to small business, do not want to cut the size of the Armed Forces, and do not want to increase excise taxes; they are more willing to cut the highway program and most of all, they are willing (54% to 30%) to cut foreign aid. 60% would raise corporate taxes. (Almost 70% are against encouragement of further gains in wages and salaries; they believe these should be held at present levels.)

As Robinson says, "The weight of opinion among the general public says No, our missile lag is not due to a failure of leadership by the Administration. The critical factor here is political allegiance. Critics are, for the most part, Democrats. A majority of Democrats - 54% - say the Administration is to blame. But a majority of Independents do not, and disagreement with this idea by Republicans is especially strong - two in three."

"All told, the voters regard the defense of the nation as too big and important and imperative to whip up as a partisan issue. It seems highly unlikely that Administration critics can successfully exploit this as an issue between now and the Fall elections. According to latest reports, Democratic leaders in Congress are recognizing this fact by shifting their strategy from the security lag to the employment sag."

X07138-A-9

  
O. M. Gale  
Special Assistant