

Poll shows Bush beatable in '92



NEW YORK (AP) — President Bush, who begins campaigning in earnest this week, opens his re-election drive with polls showing that less than half the country wants him to have a second term.

But with the national campaign just getting under way — 80 percent still don't know who the Democratic candidates are — analysts say there's plenty of time to turn things around.

A new CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll found not quite half of the nation's voters, 49 percent, think Bush deserves re-election. And the overall population is split on how he's handled his job — 46 percent approve and 47 percent disapprove.

"You look at 50 percent approval as being a good benchmark of whether a president is in a good position to be re-elected," said Larry Huguick, vice president of Gallup. "If it stays that low, history suggests he will be defeated," he said, recalling what happened to Presidents Ford and Carter.

The question analysts can't answer is whether the poll, taken while Bush was on a politically difficult trade mission to Asia, caught him at a low point from which he can bounce back.

"That's like knowing when to sell a stock," said USA Today pollster Jim Norman.

The newspaper was reporting in Tuesday's editions that among Democratic voters, former California Gov. Jerry Brown maintained the 21 percent approval rating he had in an early November Gallup poll.

The only candidate whose stock was rising significantly was Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton. He moved from 9 percent in November to 17 percent.

Clinton was followed by Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey, up from 10 percent to 11 percent; Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, down from 10 percent to 9 percent; and former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas, down from 7 percent to 6 percent.

Bush's approval rating has been on a steady slide in polls since its postwar record high of about 90 percent in March. But the president maintains his popularity will come back along with the economy. Only 24 percent approve of Bush's handling on that issue.

"His political vulnerability is being overstated, just like his political invincibility was being over-

stated five months ago," said William J. Feltus, a Bush campaign spokesman.

"There's plenty of time for things to turn around for him," Huguick acknowledged. "As we get into the campaign it's a different environment."

On Wednesday, Bush makes his first re-election campaign trip to New Hampshire, which holds the first presidential primary on Feb. 18.

The latest poll of New Hampshire voters showed conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan making inroads among Republicans, with 30 percent to Bush's 46 percent. That means Bush has three-fifths of the decided voters polled. If he does as well among the undecided, he has about 60 percent.

Nationally, Bush has 85 percent of the Republicans to just 10 percent for Buchanan in the CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll.

CNN political analyst William Schneider said Buchanan's showing in New Hampshire reflects his having campaigned there, but not elsewhere, and his support from the state's largest newspaper.

"And the voters in New Hampshire also know that theirs is a high visibility contest where they can send a message," Schneider said. He noted that 64 percent of voters in his network's poll said Bush is more likely to win than the Democrat.

The poll, like a CBS-New York Times poll last week, found a virtual dead heat between Bush and any unnamed Democratic candidate.

Republicans say such a matchup overstates Democratic strength because a generic Democrat does not have the unfavorable qualities some voters see in a real-life candidate.

A Time magazine poll Jan. 2 showed Bush running 21 points or more ahead of each of the major Democratic candidates, who are relatively little-known nationally.

Polls early in the election year also can show what's helping and hurting candidates.

The CNN poll asked voters whether they would be more likely or less likely to vote for Bush if he keeps Dan Quayle as his vice presidential candidate. Most said it would make no difference. But among independents, who make up a crucial 35 percent of the electorate, twice as many said less likely as said more likely, according to Schneider.

Don't mess with imports, U.S. manufacturer warns

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Association of Manufacturers, taking issue with three of its largest members, said Monday it opposes any attempt to ease the U.S. trade deficit by cutting Japanese auto imports.

"Trade between the United States and Japan means a lot more than cars," NAM Chairman Dexter Baker said, disagreeing with criticism from the Big Three U.S. auto makers that President Bush's trade mission last week didn't do enough to cut the deficit.

"Despite what you're hearing, this trip was very, very successful for the bulk of American manufacturers and their workers," said Baker, who heads a chemical company in Allentown, Pa., and accompanied Bush on the trip to Australia, Singapore, South Korea and Japan.

"The expectations of our automobile people were just too high and not easily achieved in a short time frame," he said.

NAM, which lobbies on behalf of the nation's manufacturing sector, "absolutely will oppose" any legislation that would cut the \$42.6 billion trade deficit with Japan by cutting Japanese auto imports, he said.

Some members of Congress, including Michigan Sen. Carl Levin whose state hosts the Big 3 automakers, have threatened Congress will cut Japa-

nese auto imports this year to ease the deficit.

While the auto makers are "important" NAM members, the group will support "the right public policy, and we don't think protectionism is the way to go," Baker said.

Four of every 10 U.S. consumers have declared a preference for foreign cars, and "I think that's how it should be. The global market place is here and now," he said.

A joint declaration of economic growth that emerged from the meeting last week between the United States and Japan should not be underestimated because it could produce a "quantum increase" in trade, Baker predicted.

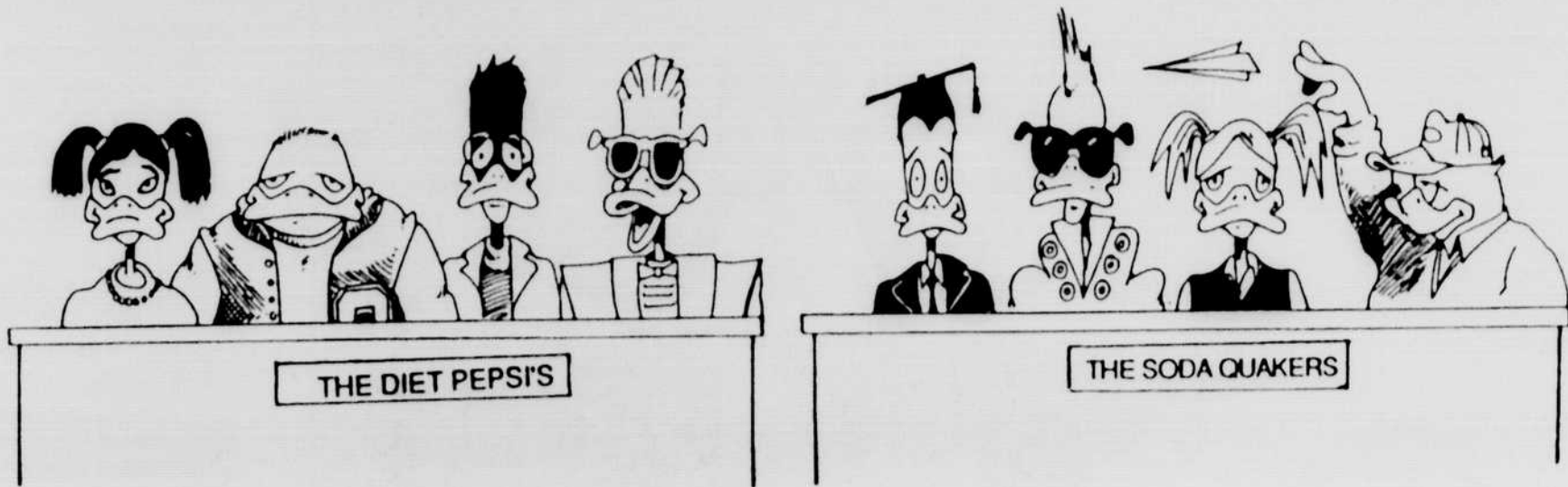
Japanese minister of international trade and industry Kojo Watanabe and Japanese businesses showed "genuine desire to find ways to purchase more American products" to avoid protectionist U.S. responses, he said.

He said he was convinced last week's talks will bring "more welcome than ever before" for U.S. goods in Japan, including autos and auto parts, glass, computers, paper and chemicals.

Baker also said progress was made during the trip toward opening markets to U.S. products and services in South Korea and gaining new commitments for patent and copyright protection from Singapore.

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