

The Harris Survey

Part 8/21/73

Most Unsatisfied by Nixon Speech

By Louis Harris

By 66 to 25 per cent, a majority of the American people in the aftermath of President Nixon's televised speech last week agree with the statement that "President Nixon has yet to answer the serious doubts about his involvement in Watergate which have come out of the Senate hearings."

By 67 to 20 per cent, more than 3 to 1, the public felt that in his answer to critics, Mr. Nixon "did not give convincing proof that he was not part of the Watergate cover-up."

Only 21 per cent of the public gave President Nixon's speech a rating of "excellent" or "pretty good" as against 64 per cent who judged it "only fair" or "poor."

It is apparent from the in-person interviewing conducted after the President's speech that as a vehicle for eliminating the doubts about presidential involvement in Watergate, President Nixon's speech of last week failed by any measure.

These results were drawn from a special Harris survey, conducted on August 18 and 19 in the homes of 1,536 individuals throughout the nation.

Other highlights of the survey show:

• By 71 to 21 per cent, a majority believe that Mr.

Nixon "has withheld important information" about Watergate and has not been "frank and honest." This latest result is up from a 58 to 21 per cent majority who felt the same way in June.

• By 67 to 26 per cent, most people agree with the statement that "it is hard to believe that, with his closest assistants involved in the Watergate affair, President Nixon did not know about the planning and later cover-up of the affair." Even after his last speech, the percentage who suspect presidential involvement has risen from 54 to 35 per cent who felt the same way back in May.

• Even though by 45 to 37 per cent, a plurality of the people are now convinced that President Nixon "did

not know about the attempt to wiretap Democratic headquarters before it happened," by 64 to 23 per cent, a majority do not feel that he "gave convincing proof that he was not involved in the original Watergate bug ging and break-in."

This evidence all adds up to the central fact: Mr. Nixon's latest attempt to answer his critics on Watergate was simply not successful by any measure. Consistently since April, the President has not presented a case which the public has found convincing. He now faces as severe a credibility crisis as any chief executive in modern times.

Nonetheless, the public still would like to be charitable with the President on Watergate issue. A substantial 59 to 28 per cent majority feel that he "knew about the attempt to cover-up Watergate."

But, by 49 to 44 per cent, a plurality also feel that even "if it is proven that President Nixon knew about the cover-up of White House involvement in Watergate," he should **not resign**.

Equally significant, by 53 to 40 per cent, a majority also agree that "President Nixon has most of his second term in the White House to go, so it is best to

give him the benefit of the doubt in the Watergate bug ging an cover-up."

However, the number who want to give him such a benefit of doubt is slipping, down from 59 per cent in May, while the number who no longer want to be sympathetic to the President has increased from 32 to 40 per cent.

In this latest survey, by 63 to 28 per cent, a majority also do not want to see the President resign over Watergate. However, those favoring resignation have doubled from the 14 per cent who felt that way in May.

But the President's stand-fast stance of no admissions and only peripheral assumption of blame has now put him in deep trouble with the American people.

The cross-section was asked:

"Do you tend to agree or disagree with critics of President Nixon who feel he has yet to answer the serious doubts about his involvement in Watergate which have come out of the Senate hearings?"

	Total Public %
Agree, not answered doubts	66
Disagree, answered doubts	25
Not sure	9

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