

The Harris Survey

Administration in Trouble on Economy

By Louis Harris

Somewhat shunted into the background by the controversy surrounding Watergate is the fact that the Nixon administration is in deep trouble with the American people on the domestic economic front. By 82-to-15 per cent, the public gives Mr.

Nixon negative marks on the "way he has handled the economy," the lowest rating on this score for the President since he has occupied the White House.

The magnitude of the loss of confidence in administration economic policies can perhaps best be measured by the 60-to-20 per cent majority

who feel Nixon policies are "doing more harm than good."

A nationwide cross-section of 1,555 households was asked between May 4 and 7, as they have been asked before:

Do you feel the economic policies of the Nixon administration are doing more good than harm or more harm than good?

| | More Good Than Harm | More Harm Than Good | Not Sure |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------|
| May 1974 | 20% | 60% | 20% |
| Feb. 1973 | 54 | 28 | 18 |
| Sept. 1972 | 55 | 26 | 19 |
| Sept. 1971 | 53 | 23 | 24 |
| Jan. 1971 | 35 | 39 | 26 |

Without doubt, the public is more critical now of Nixon administration economic measures than at any time over the past three and one half years. One key criticism leveled by the public is that the administration and the Republican Party "have been too close to big business," a view now accepted by 72 per cent of the public. People have been asked periodically:

Do you agree or disagree that the Nixon administration and the Republican Party have been too close to big business?

| | Agree, Has Been | Has Not | Not Sure |
|---------------|-----------------|---------|----------|
| May 1974 | 72% | 12% | 16% |
| November 1973 | 64 | 21 | 15 |
| February 1973 | 61 | 23 | 16 |
| November 1972 | 57 | 29 | 14 |
| August 1972 | 57 | 30 | 13 |

The biggest single criticism leveled against this administration in its relations with business is that "it has given too many advantages, made too many special deals with business," volunteered

by 38 per cent of the public.

The illegal campaign contributions of business in the 1972 election campaign were cited by another 20 per cent as evidence of the administration's close ties with corporations.

The increased profits of the oil companies during the energy shortage is yet another major reason volunteered by 15 per cent of the public. Other views expressed are that "the Republicans have always favored the big companies and the rich man" and "wages were kept under control, but profits never were" during the rapid rise in inflation.

As a consequence of these suspicions and doubts, a sizeable 69 per cent of the public is now prepared to say that the Nixon administration has been "too easy" in its dealings with big business. The cross section was asked:

Do you feel the Nixon administration has been too tough on big business, too easy, or about right in the way it has treated big business?

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Too tough | 2% |
| Too easy | 69 |
| About right | 17 |
| Not sure | 12 |
| Total Public | |

It was not unexpected that, when asked about the future direction federal policies ought to take toward big business, a substantial 71 per cent opted for "tougher" measures.