

How U.S. Reacted To Nixon Speech

Washington

About 44 per cent of the people who watched President Nixon's Watergate address on television last Wednesday night found the speech "not at all" convincing, while 27 per cent concluded it was "completely" or "quite a lot" convincing, according to a Gallup Poll commissioned by the New York Times and the Times News Service.

Other highlights of the poll showed that half of those who watched the address did not believe the President's statement that he had no involvement in the planning or coverup of the Watergate burglary; that 56 per cent believed he should turn over tape recordings related to the case to the Watergate committee and the courts, and that 58 per cent disagree with the President's statement that civil rights and anti-war protests helped create the atmosphere that led to the Watergate crimes.

The survey was conducted by telephone Thursday night from a national sample of 810

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adults. On a sample of that size, according to polling experts, the margin of error can be as much as four percentage points either way.

PHASE

Public opinion is considered particularly important in the current phase of the Watergate scandal because President Nixon's address, a defense of his conduct in the matter, was designed to appeal directly to the people rather than to the Congress and his critics.

Further, opinion sampling by members of Congress, who are now in recess, may determine how hard congressional committees push investigations into various aspects of Watergate and other government corruption.

The Gallup organization said that 77 per cent of those contacted saw the Nixon address on television, an unusually high figure that indicated a strong interest in the topic.

Following are the major questions and the responses:

• "Did President Nixon's speech increase your confidence in the Nixon Administration or not?" Twenty seven per cent yes; 63 per

cent no; 7 per cent no opinion.

• "Did you believe President Nixon when he said he had no involvement in the planning or coverup of Watergate or not?" Thirty-eight per cent yes; 50 per cent no; 12 per cent no opinion.

• "President Nixon said he has not turned over the tapes of his conversations with former aides because people in the future would be reluctant to talk freely with the President. Do you think this is a valid reason for not turning over the tapes?" Forty-one per cent yes; 51 per cent no; 8 per cent no opinion.

• "Do you think he should turn over the tapes?" Fifty-six per cent yes; 36 per cent no; 8 per cent no opinion.

• "President Nixon said that the civil rights and anti-war protests helped create the atmosphere that led to the Watergate situation, do you agree or disagree?" Twenty eight per cent agree, 58 per cent disagree; 14 per cent no opinion.

• "How convincing did you find President Nixon's speech? Completely convincing, quite a lot, somewhat, not at all?" Fifteen per cent completely; 12 per cent quite a lot; 25 per cent

somewhat; 44 per cent not at all; 4 per cent no opinion.

SURVEY

As expected, more Democrats than Republicans found the President not at all convincing, but the survey would indicate that the President failed to convince a considerable percentage of his own party. Among Republicans, 32 per cent found the President completely

convincing, 18 per cent quite a lot, 24 per cent somewhat, 23 per cent not at all, and 3 per cent had no opinion.

Among Democrats, 7 per cent found the President completely convincing, 7 per cent quite a lot, 27 per cent somewhat, 55 per cent not at all, and 4 per cent had no opinion.

Among Independents, too, the President appears to have a credibility problem. Of those polled, 13 per cent found him completely convincing, 12 per cent quite a lot, 23 per cent somewhat, 48 per cent not at all and 4 per cent had no opinion.

A spokesman for the Gallup organization said the finding that 50 per cent did not believe President Nixon's assertion of non-involvement in the planning or coverup could not be compared to the findings of previous polls about earlier denials by the President, because the question was asked specifically in regard to the Wednesday night speech.

However, a regular Gallup poll, based on interviews

with 1435 adults August 3-6, showed that about three in every four people believed the President was involved to some extent in Watergate. That finding had remained at virtually the same level since early June.

The August 3-6 poll also showed that 26 per cent believed that President Nixon should be impeached and compelled to leave the presidency, an upward trend since late June when the figure was 19 per cent.

SPEECH

To find out why people responded as they did to the Nixon speech, the New York Times interviewed at random in several cities persons who had watched the speech. The interviews were conducted separately from the Gallup poll.

Lucy Devine, a 30-year-old Detroit teacher, gave a typical reason for finding the

President unconvincing.

"He said the same things he had been saying all along, the same way. He didn't change his approach. It could have been one of ten

speeches I've heard him make."

On the other hand, Lois Elias, wife of a Pittsburgh service station manager, said she found the President "completely convincing. I felt that by what he said and how he talked. He wasn't involved in Watergate. If he were he'd know more about it."

One of the most surprising findings in the poll was that most people do not agree with Mr. Nixon that the Watergate crimes had their roots in the protest movements of the 1960s.

"My God," said Claire Millery, a youth counselor in Tempe, Ariz., "we're blaming hippies and blacks for everything that's wrong in this country, tooth decay and Watergate."

Another question asked in the poll was: "President Nixon said that Watergate should now be a matter for the courts alone and that the nation should now get on with its other business. Do you agree or disagree with him?" The response was 57 per cent yes, 38 per cent no and 5 per cent no opinion.

COURT

The question was found to be somewhat ambiguous, but there was no doubt that a large proportion of those questioned agreed that the matter should go to the court.

"I tend to agree with the President," said James Ward, a professor at Colby College, Waterville, Me., "That the Senate is trying to put him on trial in the absence of normal court procedure. I think they (the committee) are going beyond their strictly legislative function."

Carol Katz, interviewed at a lemonade stand on Chicago's Michigan avenue, was very critical of the speech but said she agreed with the President it should go to the courts.

"But to bring the issue to the courts doesn't mean we're going to forget it," she said.

The belief that Mr. Nixon should release the tapes seemed to be based, among those interviewed separately

from the poll, on the opinion that they would help to clarify the case.

"It's sheer folly for him to keep the tapes," said Jadine R. O'Brien of Portland, Me. "I feel he's guilty of covering up because he won't re-

lease them."

The most favorable response regionally to the President's speech came from the South. For example, a majority of those polled in the South, 52 per

cent, said they believed the President when he said he had no involvement in the planning or coverup of Watergate. Nationally, only 38 per cent said they so be-

lieved; in the East only 31 per cent said they believed him while 57 per cent said they did not.

New York Times