

The California Poll

Nixon's Performance Rating

By Mervin D. Field

President Nixon's popularity with the public in California during the early part of August reached an all-time low, according to the findings of the California Poll's most recent periodic survey of public opinion.

While Watergate is clearly a factor, the primary cause of the public's unprecedentedly poor appraisal of the job the President is doing seems to be the current state of the domestic economy as seen and felt by the public.

During the period from August 4 to 11, the California Poll interviewed a statewide representative sample of 1025 adults. The "job rating" accorded to Mr. Nixon was the lowest recorded for him as President or for Presidents Johnson, Kennedy or Eisenhower. Just one in five persons (20 per cent) would say they thought Mr. Nixon was doing a "good job" as President, and the largest single group of the public (44 per cent) thought he was doing a "poor job."

The following table shows how the public's regard for Mr. Nixon's performance has declined since 1970, and particularly during recent months.

Feel Nixon is doing —	August	May	November
	1973	1973	1970
GOOD JOB	20%	34%	37%
FAIR JOB	31	27	44
POOR JOB	44	35	16
NO OPINION	5	4	3

Mr. Nixon's handling of domestic economic issues seems to be disturbing the California public to a much larger extent than his handling of the Watergate affair. When asked to tell why they think Mr. Nixon is doing a poor job as President, many more people pointed to some aspect of the economy than mentioned Watergate issues. The prime concerns are inflation, high prices and the failure of controls. Also mentioned are food shortages and unemployment fears. Favoritism of business interests over people interests is also a recurring criticism. The table below shows the percentage mention of various reasons by those who rated the President's job "poor."

Another strong indication of the public's deep concern about inflation can be seen in the responses to two direct questions about price and wage controls. In one, an unusually high proportion (87 per cent) said they were dissatisfied with the way price and wage controls were working.

Further, the public is most pessimistic about

the effectiveness of the government's latest actions in controlling rising prices. Two out of three (65%) think the latest moves of the Administration will be ineffective in controlling rising prices.

"In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way price and wage controls are working? Are you highly or somewhat (satisfied) (dissatisfied)?"

	STATEWIDE
HIGHLY SATISFIED	2%
SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	8
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	28
HIGHLY DISSATISFIED	59
CAN'T SAY/NO OPINION	4

"How effective do you think the government's latest actions will be in controlling rising prices—very effective, fairly effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or not effective at all?"

	STATEWIDE
VERY EFFECTIVE	1%
FAIRLY EFFECTIVE	9
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	16
VERY INEFFECTIVE	17
NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL	48
CAN'T SAY/NO OPINION	9