

Harris Poll Shows a Growing Disenchantment in U.S.

SFChronicle

DEC 3 1973

Harris Poll Shows a Growing Disenc

Washington

In the past few years most Americans have lost confidence in their government and many other institutions that they deal with in their daily lives, according to a survey released by a congressional committee yesterday.

The survey was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates for the Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations.

Its authors concluded that, in the wake of disclosures of

government scandals this year, the public had become pessimistic and alienated. A clear majority, the survey showed, believe that "there is something deeply wrong" in the country.

State and local officials, on the other hand, tend to be optimistic and to believe that the problems that led to the public cynicism are transitory.

Of many familiar institutions in society — including medicine, the military, organized religion, government, universities and labor

unions — only television news and the press have risen in the public's esteem since 1966, the survey showed.

The percentage of Americans who showed "a great deal of confidence" in the executive branch of the federal government dropped from 41 per cent in 1966 to 27 per cent in 1972 and to 19 per cent last September, the Harris study stated.

Among the findings:

- A majority of American — 53 percent — agreed that "there is something deeply

wrong in America;" 37 per cent disagreed with that statement, and the remaining were 'nor sure.' The Harris organization said that it was the first time since the assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1968 that a majority had answered the question affirmatively.

- This disenchantment cut across a number of statistical lines, with high proportions of persons in every income level and every section of the country evidenc-

ing the feeling.

Asked to explain their concern, one-quarter of those sampled said that "government leaders are corrupt and immoral." More people gave that reason than any other.

- By 63 per cent to 34 per cent, state officials denied that something is "deeply wrong." Local officials disputed that statement by 48 per cent to 45 per cent.

- Based on four questions that the Harris team has used on a "scale of alienation" for more than a de-

cade, the survey concluded that 5 per cent of Americans 'expressed disenchantment,' compared with only 29 per cent who answered that way in 1966.

- Well over half and up to three-quarters of those surveyed agreed with such statements as "wire-tapping and spying under the excuse of national security is a serious threat to people's privacy" and "most elective officials are in politics for all they personally can get out of it for themselves."

- Asked what they would

bring up if they had a chance to sit down and talk with President Nixon, three out of every four persons said "Watergate."

Forty-one per cent of the public expressed a "great deal" of confidence in television news, more confidence than they had in most other institutions. Only 17 per cent of the officials had such confidence in television reporting.

As for the written press, 30 per cent of the public and only 19 per cent of the officials expressed high confidence.

New York Times