

Watergate Impact Seen as Moderate

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BOLTON LANDING, N.Y., June 2—Viewed through the long-distance lenses of some public opinion poll-takers, Watergate is not a cataclysmic event that shattered confidence in political institutions.

One survey indicates that the major revelations on Watergate a year ago had relatively little long-range effect on the public's faith in the political system.

Another suggests that removing President Nixon from office would have virtually no effect on Americans' respect for the office of the presidency.

These and some other findings on Watergate were presented this weekend at the annual meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion Research.

Generally, the polls discussed here confirm that Mr. Nixon's personal popularity is down to a hard-core minimum, with about 30 per cent of Americans expressing approval of his performance. His support is concentrated in the South and among older, more conservative people.

However, surveys attempting to probe the long-range effect of Watergate show no dramatic loss of confidence in the political system.

Political scientists from the University of California at Berkeley concluded there was little change in attitude toward the political system during a crucial year when many dramatic Watergate developments dominated the news.

Their surveys were conducted in the San Francisco area during the summers of

1972 and 1973. The results presented here this weekend reported that "despite the President's embroilment in the most explosive political scandal since Teapot Dome, citizens retained their confidence in the integrity of the political system."

The proportion expressing confidence in the system remained approximately the same through both polls.

One reason, the five political scientists wrote, was that people perceived that exposure, investigation, and prosecution in the Watergate cases "proved that the political system works."

Disgust with the President and his advisers was

offset by admiration for the roles of the press, the courts, and the Senate Watergate committee.

Another poll indicated that if Mr. Nixon were removed from office respect for the office of President would not decline.

Conducted early this year, the survey described about 70 per cent as expressing at least some respect and confidence for the office of the President. Asked what their attitude would be if Mr. Nixon were removed, about the same proportion said they would continue to respect the office.