

SUPPORT FOR FORD DECLINES SHARPLY

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A Poll Links Drop to Pardon
and Finds Disapproval
for Timing of Action
NYTimes

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 11 —

President Ford's decision to pardon Richard M. Nixon and to consider pardons for other alleged Watergate conspirators has sapped his support among the general public, special Gallup Poll indicates.

The survey also showed wide disapproval at least for the timing of the pardon, although there were indications that most of the persons questioned in the survey would not have opposed a pardon for the former President at a later time.

The poll, commissioned by The New York Times, was conducted last night after the White House said that pardons for all of those involved in Watergate were under study. A total of 553 persons, living in all sections of the country, were interviewed by telephone.

Substantial Loss

Asked whether they thought Mr. Ford was doing a good, fair or poor job as President, the respondents gave the following answers: good, 32 per cent; fair, 33; poor, 25; no opinion, 10.

In a similar but not precisely comparable poll conducted Aug. 16-19, the Gallup organization found Mr. Ford winning the approbation of almost everyone.

That survey showed that 71 per cent of those polled approved of the way he was handling his job, with 3 per cent disapproving and 26 per cent undecided. Allotting half those who answered "fair" and

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all of those who answered "good" in The Times's poll to the "approval" category — which gives Mr. Ford the benefit of every doubt—his approval rate has fallen from 71 per cent to 49 per cent in a matter of three weeks.

There is little doubt as to what caused the drop. Asked whether pardon developments had caused them to form a less favorable opinion of the President, 60 per cent responded in the affirmative.

Even allowing for the margin of error inherent in such surveys—a Gallup spokesman said there were 95 chances in 100 that it was accurate within 6 percentage points—the poll demonstrated that Mr. Ford had wounded himself grievously.

Like other polls, this one obviously could not measure how long public disenchantment would last. In some cases, a specific development will cause the public to turn permanently against a President; more often, anger passes and other developments reverse the perception.

Strong Disapproval

On the specific question of the pardon to former President Nixon—the first of its kind in American history, announced unexpectedly by Mr. Ford last Sunday morning—the Gallup sample expressed unusually strong disapproval:

Approve 31 per cent
Disapprove 62 per cent
No opinion 7 per cent

Of those who expressed disapproval, six out of ten said they wanted a trial to be held before any pardon was issued; four out of ten said they would have opposed a pardon regardless of the circumstances.

If those who approved of the President's action were lumped together with those who seemed to be objecting principally on the grounds of timing, more than two-thirds of the sample (68 per cent) appeared to be indicating that they might not have objected to a Presidential pardon at a later date.

Thus, the majority of the public seemed to be question-

ing Mr. Ford's political judgment rather than his instinct in wanting to keep Mr. Nixon from going to the penitentiary.

Public opinion, as reflected in the survey, was evenly divided on the question of pardons for Mr. Nixon's former aides—45 per cent "yes" to 44 per cent "no," with 11 per cent expressing no judgment.

Neither the pardon for President Nixon nor the news that pardons for other Watergate figures were possible nor Mr. Ford's new initiatives on amnesty for Vietnam war resisters has had much effect on the question how the nation should deal with draft resisters and reserters.

Previous Survey's

The same question — "do you think young men who have left the United States to avoid the draft should or should not be allowed to return to this country without some form of punishment?"—was asked in previous Gallup surveys in 1972, 1973 and 1974 and in The Times poll.

The responses:

	1972	1973	April 1974	Sept. 1974
Should	36	29	34	30
Should Not	60	67	58	61
No. Opinion	4	4	8	9

In other words, six out of 10 Americans, despite all of the upheavals of the last two years or so, have consistently clung to a negative attitude on the amnesty question.

The Times's survey also attempted to measure the impact of President Ford's pardon for Mr. Nixon on the Congressional elections in November. Once again, the poll showed only the attitudes yesterday, almost two months before election day, and not those that will be passing through voters' minds as they walk into the polls to cast ballots.

A substantial majority of the sample—64 per cent—said the pardon would have little impact, bearing out the initial judgment of most political professionals. But 28 per cent of the respondents said they would be less likely to support Republicans and 4 per cent said they would be more likely to, with 4 per cent giving no opinion.