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State Poll

Watergate And Ford

By Mervin D. Field

After three months in office, President Ford's standing with the public in California is still strongly influenced by Watergate-related events.

Those who think he is doing a "good job" (29 per cent) seem chiefly to be impressed by his efforts in cleaning up the "mess" left by his predecessor, but are not very often inclined to single out any of his other policies for praise.

Those who rate Mr. Ford's job so far as "poor" (17 per cent) are more likely to blame him for the Nixon pardon than for any other single action. There is also rather extensive criticism of him for failing to deal with inflation and economic problems.

The California Poll measured public opinion toward President Ford during October 28-30, and found that 29 per cent of the California public rated the job he was doing as "good," 17 per cent thought it was "poor," and 45 per cent felt it was just a "fair job," and 9 per cent had no opinion.

Early in 1974, Mr. Ford was expected to do a "poor job" by only 12 per cent of the public, and in August, 1974, at the height of President Nixon's troubles, just ten per cent thought Mr. Ford would do poorly as president. Since he assumed the office, however, the public's criticism of Mr. Ford has been rising, having now reached 17 per cent.

Mr. Ford's image with the California public since it became clear that he was highly likely to succeed Mr. Nixon has consistently been moderately, rather than strongly, favorable. The percentage of people who thought he would do a "good job" has never exceeded 33 per cent.

By contrast, former Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, the latter until late in his term, received "good job" ratings well above 50 per cent.

However, President Nixon in the middle of his first term (1970) managed to achieve only 37 per cent "good job" ratings, and had a 16 per cent "poor job" rating. President Ford's standing today does not appear to be greatly different from that of his predecessor before Watergate, but is, of course, a great gain over President Nixon's plummeting prestige during his last troubled months in office.

The table below shows comparative popularity rating figures for Mr. Nixon and Mr. Ford. Mr. Ford's standings are divided between measurements made before he assumed office and those made since.

	Good job	Fair job	Poor job	No opinion
FORD WHILE PRESIDENT:				
October 28-30	29%	45	17	9
September 28-October 1	33%	43	15	9
EXPECTATION FOR FORD:				
Early August, 1974	22%	43	10	25
May, 1974	27%	41	14	18
February, 1974	21%	37	12	30
NIXON WHILE PRESIDENT:				
August, 1974	16%	21	61	2
February, 1974	18%	32	47	3
August, 1973	20%	31	44	5
May, 1973	34%	27	35	4
November, 1970	37%	44	16	3

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