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**Businessmen Think Watergate
Hampers Nixon Economic Role**

By MICHAEL C. JENSEN

By an overwhelming margin, leaders of American business say that the Watergate affair has seriously affected President Nixon's ability to manage the nation's business and economic affairs, according to a survey by The New York Times.

Eighty per cent of the executives of major companies responding to a question on the economy agreed that the President's economic performance had suffered because of Watergate, and some of them referred to Mr. Nixon's preoccupation with his defense.

Edward N. Cole, president of the General Motors Corporation, for example, said the President's ability to manage economic affairs had been affected by his "credibility of office."

The Times's survey was conducted by means of a question-

naire mailed in late June to top executives of the nation's 500 largest industrial concerns. A total of 167 responses, or 34 per cent, were returned. Such a response is considered statistically significant.

In addition to disclosing a disenchantment with the President's economic performance,

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the survey also indicated that Mr. Nixon's over-all support from the business community, long considered one of his strongholds, has been seriously impaired by Watergate.

Judging by comments written in by ese executives, much of their displeasure apparently arose following the White House release last April of transcripts of White House conversations.

A total of 42 per cent of the officials responding to a question on impeachment said they believed the House of Representatives should impeach the President, and 65 per cent thought it would. The majority—58 per cent—thought that it should not.

Support Shown Earlier

In a survey of businessmen's attitudes conducted by The Times in November, 1972, on the eve of Mr. Nixon's re-election, 91.4 per cent of the 430 executives responding said they planned to vote for Mr. Nixon.

The erosion of business support comes at a time when the public is also becoming increasingly critical of Mr. Nixon. The latest Gallup Poll, released in mid-June, indicated that 50 per cent of the public believed there was enough evidence of wrongdoing by the President to justify impeachment. And 44 per cent said they believed Mr. Nixon's removal from office was warranted.

An analysis of responses to The Times's survey indicated that 38 per cent of the business executives believed Mr. Nixon's removal or resignation was warranted.

Ford Is Evaluated

A total of 43 per cent of the businessmen answering a question on Vice President Ford, said they felt he would do a better job than the President of managing the economy. But the majority—57 per cent—said the vice president would not do a beteter job.

Notwithstanding the harsh judgments on Mr. Nixon, many of the businessmen said they still supported him, and a number of them were sharply critical of the media for its intensive coverage of Watergate. Some said that the questionnaire they were asked to answer was an example of unfairness by the press to Mr. Nixon.

The executives were given

the option of answering the questionnaire anonymously, and most did. A few, however, said they were willing to be quoted.

Kenneth W. Monfort president of Monfort of Colorado, Inc., a large cattle and meat-processing company, said he believed the House should and President. Furthermore, he said, he believed the Senate should vote to convict Mr. Nixon, but did not think it would. Mr. Monfort noted that he had been listed on the White House "enemies" list.

Uniroyal Chairman Differs

Expressing a sharply different view was George R. Vila, chairman of the board of Uniroyal, Inc., the Fire Company. "It is a great misfortune that this had to happen as it did," he said. "I suspect Nixon's tactics have been pretty much par for the course for U.S.A. politics. We need reforms, and that is the bright side of the entire procedure."

A minority view, but one strongly expressed by a few businessmen, was summarized by R. B. Pamplin, board chairman of the Georgia-Pacific Corporation, a large lumber company base din Portland, Oregon.

"The press and Congress have been making it difficult for President Nixon to run the country properly," he said. "If I had to lay the blame on the 'lack of running the country' it would be against the press and Congress, rather than Watergate itself."

On the other hand, a textile executive from South Carolina who chose to remain anonymous, said the Watergate transcripts had been "very damaging to the image of Nixon."

"Even his friends are 'quiet now,'" he said. "Also, in my opinion, the public confidence in our executive branch has been badly shaken and will take time to recover, if ever."

Minority Favors Conviction

Although 28 per cent of the executives responding to a question on conviction, said they thought the Senate should convict Mr. Nixon, only 6 per cent said they believed such action would take place.

The spread between desire and expectation was even wider on the matter of resignation. While 28 per cent of the executives said they thought the President should resign, only one per cent said they believed he would.

Many of the officials said they were critical of the President's preoccupation with Watergate.

"All decisions now are made

to protect his ability to remain in office," said the chairman of one company.

Some of the businessmen expressed mixed feelings about the pragmatism of the White House, and its moral tone. Referring to the released transcripts of White House conversations, William S. Wire 2d, vice president of finance for Genesco, Inc., a diversified apparel company with headquarters in Nashville, said that he was appalled by the indecisiveness of the discussions between the President and his advisers.

"The examination of all alternatives, including illegal ones, does not bother me as long as the decision eliminates illegal options," he said. "Nixon's decisions are too vague to tell."

He also said, however, that the transcripts conveyed a "horrible moral tone for this office."

Many of the executives who responded anonymously were strong in their denunciations of the President's conversations. Asked their reactions to the Watergate transcripts, they responded with such terms as: "absolutely shocking," "appalled," "disgust," "depressing, discouraging, dispiriting," "lousy," and "ugh."

Some of my pride in being an American was lost," said one executive, "that such a shallow, amoral man should be President."

Administration Called Shakey

"Merely reaffirmed my previously held conviction concerning the shabbiness and superficiality of the Nixon Administration," said the chairman of another company.

Another executive said he believed the transcripts "proved the President's complicity and guilt."

Some executives said they were disappointed in the transcripts, but did not find conclusive evidence of guilt.

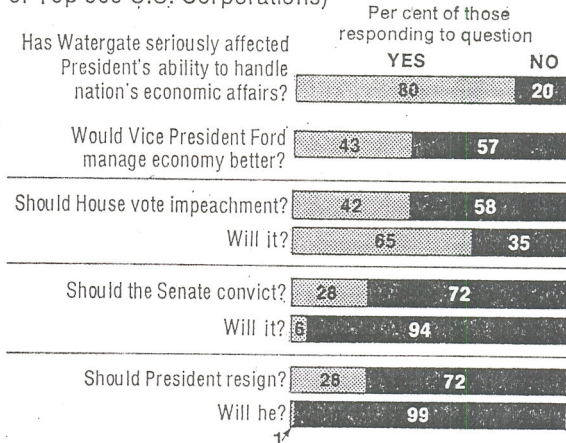
"Damaging, but I'm tired of Watergate," said one businessman. "We have more serious problems to solve. Washington has lost its perspective."

Another said: "Certainly no hard evidence to impeach. Unbelievable that, knowing all was being recorded, the President spoke as he did."

"Proved that Nixon is a calculating politician," said one executive, "a hallmark of the Democrats since F.D.R. [Franklin D. Roosevelt] but something the Republicans have lacked, hence their minority position. Also proved Nixon trusted the

The Impeachment Survey Results

(Responses from 167 Chief Executives of Top 500 U.S. Corporations)



George R. Vila
Uniroyal



R. B. Pamplin
Georgia-Pacific



Edward N. Cole
General Motors

wrong people."

Other executives saw nothing wrong with the transcripts, and offered such comments as the following:

"Much ado about nothing," said one board chairman.

"Not surprised to see that discussions in the Executive Office resembled discussions in business and nonprofit executive meetings," said another business leader.

Another businessman said the transcripts "revealed a political activity which would have been duplicated by [former Presidents] Johnson, Kennedy, Truman, and is being duplicated in national and state Government activities throughout the country."

"About the same as the transcripts of any shareholders meeting in the last decade," said one businessman. "I think any President looking out over the sea of heads who elected or opposed him unsuccessfully

—be they pin, egg or meat—is entitled to call up a few hells and damns and S.O.B. labels just to keep his sanity."

Among the comments directed at the media was a statement by Rune E. Swanson, a vice president of the National Gypsum Company in Buffalo. "Why don't we allow Congress to determine if the facts warrant impeachment of the President—and stop trying the President every day in the newspapers and other media," he said.