

**The Harris Survey**

# Majorities Favor Curb on Wiretap And Surveillance

By Louis Harris

Sizable majorities of the American people support measures that would more strongly protect individual citizens from illegal wiretapping and illegal spying and surveillance. A Harris Survey also indicates that there has at the same time been an important increase in public concern for citizens' rights of free expression, compared with the climate of opinion three years ago.

Here are some key findings from a recent in-person survey of a cross-section of 1,546 households across the nation:

•By 77 to 14 per cent, those polled favor "a law that would make it a major offense for any person or organization to engage in illegal wiretapping."

•By 73 to 16 per cent, Americans also support "a law that would make political spying in campaigns a serious offense."

•By 67 to 17 per cent, they also favor "much stiffer penalties for people who leak testimony before a grand jury to the press." Over the past few years, newspaper columnists and reporters have obtained verbatim accounts of testimony before grand juries, a violation of the law, for which the public would like to see stiffer penalties imposed.

All of these decisive public mandates stem directly from the events connected with the Watergate affair.

Back in 1970 and again recently in 1973, a cross-section of 1,546 households nationwide was asked:

"Some people have suggested that the following

*things be done to help restore stability and order to the country. For each, tell me if you would favor or oppose such a step being taken?"*

	Agree %	Dis- Agree %	Not Sure %
All protest meetings should be reviewed in advance by government authorities to be sure that what people are protesting is legitimate and they will not urge others to overthrow the system.			
1973	43	47	10
1970	53	34	13
Authorities should be given the right to censor films, TV, radio, and theater for unpatriotic or revolutionary content.			
1973	43	47	10
1970	57	32	11
Newspapers that preach revolution should be banned from circulation.			
1973	40	51	9
1970	52	35	13
There should be a law to make campus protests grounds for expulsion from college.			
1973	38	49	13
1970	48	37	15
	Agree %	Dis- Agree %	Not Sure %
Meetings to denounce the President should be banned.			
1973	34	57	9
1970	42	45	13
No one should be allowed to have pornographic (dirty) books, pictures, or movies in his possession.			
1973	27	64	9
1970	34	53	13

The thrust of public opinion obviously has been in the direction of opening up the country to public criticism and free speech, even of the most extreme kind. While part of this trend undoubtedly is the result of a subsiding of protests, perhaps, an even more important part stems from public reaction to the exposure of high-level efforts to close down dissent and criticism.