

## THE HARRIS SURVEY

# Watergate Fails As Vote Issue

By Louis Harris

Neither the Watergate bugging affair nor Democratic charges that the Republicans have a \$10 million secret fund from "Big business" has made much dent in this election. A majority of 57 percent agree with the statement that the GOP campaign fund matter is "mostly politics" and an even higher 62 percent dismiss the Watergate episode on the same ground.

The Watergate episode, in which individuals employed by the Republican campaign committee were caught wire-tapping Democratic headquarters in Washington, has been a major plank in Senator McGovern's contention that "corruption has been rife in the Nixon Administration. In-depth questioning on the subject among 1585 likely voters earlier this month yielded this set of public perceptions of the Watergate issue:

- A substantial 76 percent of the voters reported they had followed the events in the Watergate bugging case. By 70-13 percent, a big majority perceived the wire-tapping of Democratic headquarters as a case of "political spying." By an even more lopsided 84-9 percent, voters also agreed with the statement that it is a "basic violation of civil liberties and individual freedom to put wiretaps in opposition party's headquarters."

- However, by 50-25 percent, the voters did not feel that "White House aides ordered the bugging." By an even more substantial 66-16 percent, nearly two in every three voters also did not believe that "President Nixon was involved or had knowledge of the Watergate affair."

- And by a substantial 62-26 percent, most voters said they were not worried about the civil liberties aspects of the Watergate bugging, since "it is mostly politics." And by 57-25 percent, another majority believe that such "political spying" is a "common occurrence" in politics, especially around campaign time.

Thus, it can be reported that while the American public is aware of the civil liberties implications in the Watergate affair, they are not so aroused that they are prepared to put the whole episode beyond the usual din of partisan politics in an election year. Nor do most people believe that President Nixon or his top White House aides were involved in either knowing about or giving the orders for the bugging.

As for the Democratic charge that the "Republicans are hiding \$10 million in campaign contributions, mostly from big business, given in return for favors from the Nixon Administration," only 18 percent of the voters give credence to it.

A much larger 57 percent of the electorate agrees with the description of the controversy over campaign contributions as "mostly politics." When probed to find out why they feel this way, a substantial 34 percent of the voters answered that "these are the same kind of charges that come up in every election and it is just the usual mud-throwing that goes on."