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By Louis Harris

While the American people have found many of the detailed disclosures of the Watergate affair to be confusing and even bewildering, one major fall-out is that 81 per cent of the public now believes "corruption at the federal level" to be, at the least, "serious," and 52 per cent consider it to be "very serious." In an unusual turn of events, people by a wide margin rate corruption at the federal level to be worse than that prevailing in local or state government.

Sizable numbers of the public find themselves incapable of yet drawing definitive judgments about the details of the Watergate case.

As a businessman in Galveston, Texas, put it, "Every day something new seems to come to light. It's hard to follow, but it looks worse all the time."

However, among those who felt capable of making judgments about the Watergate in mid-April, the public response was heavily negative as regards the role played by key figures in the administration.

Here are some specific examples of how Watergate looked to the American people in nationwide interviewing conducted in person among 1,537 households between April 18-23. The cross section was asked:

"Let me ask you who you think was behind the bugging of Democratic headquarters in the Watergate affair. Do you think (READ LIST) was behind it or not?"

	Behind It %	Not Behind It %	Not Sure %
The Nixon campaign committee	48	12	40
Republican party security men	35	16	49
The White House staff	31	18	51
Former Atty. Gen. John Mitchell	30	14	56
Nixon chief of staff H. R. Haldeman	25	13	62
President Nixon himself	21	39	40

By 4-to-1, 48 to 12 per cent, most now agree with the statement that "the Nixon campaign committee was behind the bugging of Democratic headquarters in the Watergate affair." Back in early October, at the height of the campaign for President, the public felt the same way, but by a much narrower 33 to 30 per cent.

By better than 2-to-1, 80 to 14 per cent, those persons with opinions feel that "former Attorney General John

Mitchell was "behind" the political spying. Last fall, by a 3-to-2 margin, those who then expressed views on the subject felt that Mitchell was not involved.

By close to 2-to-1, 25 to 13 per cent, those with opinions are also inclined to think that "Nixon chief of staff H. R. Haldeman" was back of the wire-tapping plan. Haldeman was not

asked about in earlier surveys.

By almost 2-to-1, 31 to 18 per cent, those with opinions believe "the White House staff was behind the bugging." Last fall, most people with views at that time took the opposite position that this was not the case, by 46 to 19 per cent. The key difference between the seriousness of Water-

gate last fall and today can be found in the growing belief that the White House initiated the political spying and was "behind it."

When the public was asked if "President Nixon himself were behind the bugging of Democratic headquarters in the Watergate affair," by 39 to 21 per cent, almost 2-to-1, most do not think he was responsible.

# Corruption as 'Serious'

But back in October of last year, a much larger, 5-to-1 majority, 60 to 12 per cent, felt certain Mr. Nixon was not involved in giving the orders for Watergate.

The earlier position of the Nixon administration in claiming that White House staff members ought to plead executive privilege and not testify before the U.S. Senate Select Commit-

tee on Watergate was believed to be "wrong" by 58 per cent of the public. Mr. Nixon, of course, changed his mind on this subject, and asked that full cooperation be given the Ervin committee.

Nevertheless, when asked to say whether "the Watergate episode is a very serious question involving the honesty of the White House,

"or is "mostly politics" the public opt for the statement that "it is mostly politics," by 48 to 36 per cent. However, the number who feel that way is sharply down from 62 per cent who laid the whole business off to "politics" last October.

The net effect of these and other recent developments has raised concern about the moral climate in

Washington. The cross section was asked:

*"How serious a problem do you think corruption is on the federal level — very serious, somewhat serious, or not really serious?"*

	Total Public
Very serious .....	52
Somewhat serious .....	29
Not really serious .....	11
Not sure .....	8

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