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Reaction

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# State Poll on Watergate

By Mervin D. Field

President Nixon's recent announcement that he did try to limit the Watergate investigation in the interests of national security was received by a public that was already deeply skeptical of previous pronouncements that the President was completely ignorant of what was being done by his White House staff.

A statewide cross-section survey completed by The California Poll last week before the Senate hearings began and the President's announcement on Tuesday showed that only 18 per cent of the public then believed he did not know about the attempted cover-up. The public's misgivings about President Nixon's involvement reached even deeper: just one in three people said they believed he was unaware of the Watergate plot before it took place or of the allegedly illegal activities of his re-election campaign committee.

Despite their loss of confidence that the President was fully committed to bringing out the full truth about Watergate, however, only a minority were willing to go so far as to suggest that the President should not continue in office; 36 per cent of the public took this

position. Those who felt he should remain in office are divided between giving positive support and fear of the trouble it would cause if he did not continue.

The survey was taken between May 7 and 17, and consists of a representative statewide cross-section of 1043 California adults.

Some other aspects of the public's view of the Watergate affair revealed by this poll are:

The public has little sympathy for the argument that the men in the White House who became involved in the Watergate affair should be pardoned because they believed what they were doing was in the best interests of the President and the country.

The public appears to treat the attempted cover-up of Watergate more seriously than the break-in itself, or than the alleged violations of campaign financing laws.

Present indications are that Republican candidates for California Congressional seats next year could suffer because of the Watergate scandal. Almost one voter in five now says he will be less likely to vote for the Republican candidate in next year's Congressional elections.

Following are tabulations of questions asked in the California Poll's survey on the Watergate incident.

"Some people feel the Watergate incident was no different from the usual political spying that goes on in campaigns. Others feel it was a lot more serious than that. In your opinion, do you think the Watergate spying was worse than what usually goes on, about the same, or not as bad as the usual spying that goes on in a Presidential campaign?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Worse	50%	62%	33%
About same	42	32	58
No opinion	4	2	6
Not as bad	4	4	3

"How about the alleged activities of the Committee in trying to cover up the Watergate matter—would you say that the attempts to cover up the Watergate matter were extremely serious, very serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Extremely serious	38%	46%	23%
Very serious	27	28	26
Somewhat serious	18	15	24
Not too serious	10	6	17
Not at all serious	4	2	8
No opinion	3	3	2

"Some people feel these (alleged campaign law violations) are no worse than things that typically happen in Presidential campaigns, while other people feel they are a lot more serious than that. In your opinion, do you feel the alleged campaign law violations of the Committee are worse than usual, about the same, or not as bad as the usual campaign violations that occur in a Presidential campaign?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Worse	40%	52%	20%
About same	52	42	70
Not as bad	3	2	5
No opinion	5	4	5

"Do you believe that President Nixon, himself, knew about the plot to break into and bug the Democratic headquarters office in Watergate before it took place, or not?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
He did know	49%	61%	28%
He did not know	36	25	57
No opinion	15	14	15

"Do you believe President Nixon, himself, knew about the activities of the Committee to cover up the Watergate affair after the men were arrested last June?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
He did know	67%	79%	48%
He did not know	18	9	37
No opinion	15	12	17

"Do you believe President Nixon, himself, knew about the other alleged illegal activities of the Committee or not?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
He did know	49%	62%	28%
He did not know	32	19	55
No opinion	19	19	20

"Some people feel the men in the White House who became involved in the Watergate affair believed what they were doing was in the best interests of the President and the country, and so they shouldn't be judged too harshly. Other people say they should be prosecuted to the fullest extent possible. How do you feel about this—do you think they should be treated leniently or prosecuted fully?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Treat leniently	19%	15%	27%
Prosecute fully	66	73	58
Undecided	10	8	11
No opinion	5	4	4

"It has been said that next year Republican candidates for congress may suffer because of the Watergate scandal. Do you, personally, believe the Watergate matter will make any difference in the way you will be likely to vote in the next Congressional election? (If "yes"): Will it make you more likely or less likely to vote for the REPUBLICAN candidate?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Less likely to vote GOP	19%	28%	3%
More likely to vote GOP	2	—	6
Will not have an effect on vote	68	60	82
Don't know/no opinion	11	12	9

"Do you think President Nixon is doing everything he can to help bring out the whole truth of what happened, or do you think he could do more than he is doing?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Is doing everything	34%	23%	56%
Could do more	57	68	36
No opinion	9	9	8

"If the investigations now taking place show that President Nixon actually did know about any illegal activities of his election committee, do you think he should be allowed to continue in office for the rest of his term or not?"

	Statewide	Democrats	Republicans
Should be	48%	39%	67%
Should not be	36	46	21
Depends/qualified	9	11	8
No opinion	7	4	6

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