

Most Americans See No Basis For Resignation By Nixon Now

By Louis Harris

By 62-to-22 per cent, a majority of the American people feel that President Nixon "should not resign" on the basis of information developed up to the point when the Watergate hearings were temporarily suspended last week. However, by 48 to 39 per cent, a plurality of the public believes he "should resign, if it is proven that President Nixon knew about the original plan to bug Democratic headquarters." And by 46 to 40 per cent, there is narrow backing that "he should resign if it is proven that President Nixon ordered the cover-up of White House involvement in Watergate after Republican agents were caught there."

Thus, albeit by a narrow margin, the American people have reached a conclusion that, if presidential involvement in the planning or cover-up of Watergate "can be proven," there is little choice left but for Mr. Nixon to resign.

Between June 14 and 18, a cross-section of 1,509 people 18 years of age and over were asked in personal interviews conducted in their homes across the country:

"Do you feel that President Nixon personally knew about the attempt to wiretap Democratic headquarters before it happened or don't you feel he knew about that?"

	DID NIXON KNOW ABOUT WATERGATE IN ADVANCE?		
	He Knew	Did Not Know	Not Sure
	%	%	%
June 14-18, '73..	40	36	24
May	34	45	21
April	32	45	21
Oct. '72	16	66	18
Sept.	11	66	23

By mid-June, before the Dean testimony, a clear majority of the public had become convinced that Mr. Nixon had knowledge of the cover-up. On the other hand, people were not quite as convinced that the President ordered the cover-up:

"Do you feel President Nixon personally ordered the attempted cover-up of White House involvement in Watergate, or do you feel he did not order it?"

	DID NIXON ORDER WATERGATE COVER-UP?	
	Total Public	%
Nixon ordered cover-up	30	
Did not order	40	
Not sure	30	

On whether or not Mr. Nixon initiated the actual orders for the cover-up, the public still gives him the benefit of the doubt, and nearly one in three of those interviewed had yet to make up his mind. This is an im-

portant fact about current public opinion, for it indicates there is still some room for the President to seek an escape from public condemnation if he can prove that he was misled or misinformed about the cover-up.

The conclusion of most Americans in mid-June was that the President should not resign.

Most feel that proof of presidential involvement in the bugging plan should be followed by a resignation. People feel almost as strongly about Mr. Nixon resigning if it were proven that he ordered the cover-up:

"If it is proven that President Nixon ordered the cover-up of White House involvement in Watergate, after Republican agents were caught there, do you think he should resign or not?"

	SHOULD NIXON RESIGN IF HE ORDERED WATERGATE COVER-UP?	
	Total Public	%
Should resign	46	
Not resign	40	
Not sure	14	

Obviously, the public does not think that the proof of direct presidential involvement has yet been forthcoming. But people are more suspicious than ever before that Mr. Nixon was involved.