

A Question of Public Trust

THERE WAS a time when Americans were confident and carefree, but that, reported Louis Harris poll surveyors last week, was clearly not the mood in the nation today.

"Pessimism," "alienation," were the words that the Washington pollsters had heard over and over. And to the statement: "There is something deeply wrong in America," 53 per cent of those polled agreed, with only 37 per cent disagreeing.

The public appeared to take out much of its frustrations on its political leaders. One - quarter of those questioned said that "government leaders are corrupt and immoral," while only 19 per cent could say they showed "a great deal of confidence" in the executive branch of the Federal government.

Events of the last week did not seem to restore the growing lack of confidence:

Watergate Tapes: The confusion surrounding the circumstances of the 18-minute blank gap in a key Watergate tape recording continued, with the White House changing its original position on the matter.

The tape dealt with President Nixon's conversation with former aide H. R. Haldeman on June 20, 1972, three days after the Watergate break-in.

Initially the White House seemed to place the full blame on Mr. Nixon's long-time personal secretary Rose Mary Woods, who herself at first testified that she had erased it all by mistakenly pressing the wrong button while preparing a transcript of the tape.

'Blow the Lid'

After she later insisted that her mistake could have caused a gap of only four or five minutes, J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., a White House lawyer, asserted that Miss Wood's part in the 18-minute erasure was "just a possibility."

The whole incident seemed to place Miss Woods — who was told by the White House, curtly it was reported, to get her own attorney — and the Administration in opposite corners.



KROGH

They sent her down here like a lamb to be slaughtered. They're throwing her to the wolves," the magazine quoted the attorney's friend.

Computers

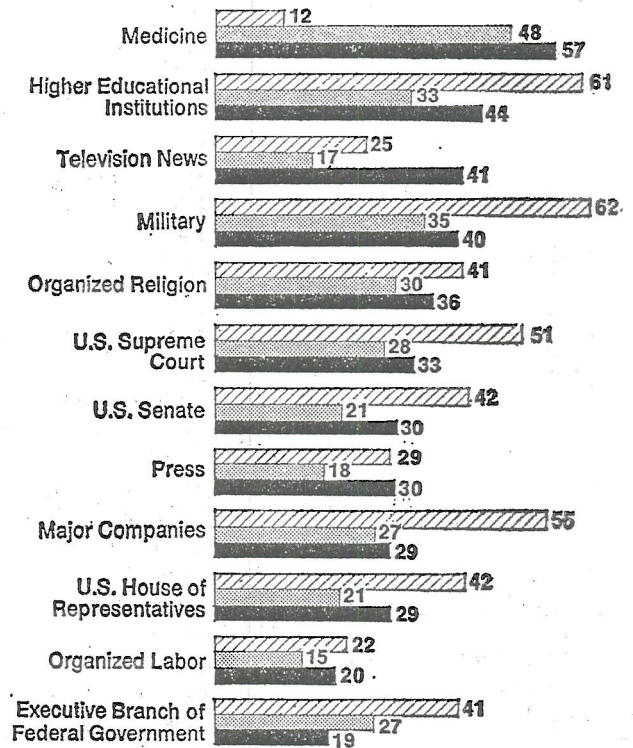
Meanwhile, in New York's West Harlem a panel of experts in computer and recording technology began studying the June 20 tape with hopes of restoring the erased portions through a series of "signal enhancement" tests.

Through filtering and amplifying signals left on the erased portions, it was considered possible to recreate original conversations, as long as the tape had not been repeatedly passed through a strong magnetic field.

Impeachment: "The House has more than enough to justify impeachment." So began an editorial last week in the Akron Beacon - Journal, which once endorsed

Degree of Confidence in Various Institutions

In Per Cent . 1965 1972 1973



Source: Louis Harris and Associates Survey

Last week's Newsweek magazine, in fact, quoted a friend of Miss Wood's attorney Charles Rhyne saying that Miss Woods was being made a scapegoat.

"Just from the little I know, I could blow the lid right off the White House," Rhyne reportedly told a friend, according to Newsweek. "You wouldn't believe what they asked her to do."

This World, Sunday, December 9, 1973

* This sentence not in Newsweek (10 Dec., p. 27).

President Nixon, but was now calling for his ouster.

Congress was looking into that possibility, with some congressional Republicans suggesting that Mr. Nixon's deadline on "Operation Candor" could not last beyond late - January, the time the next session of Congress began.

"He's got a long way to go," said Senate GOP Whip Robert Griffin (Rep-Mich.). "It's two steps forward, and one step backward."

At the same time, a New York Times survey of 32 of the 38 House Judiciary committee — responsible for investigating charges for impeachment — found all committee members agreeing the President would be subject to impeachment if he were found to have violated criminal law, with two-thirds of those interviewed believing the President could be impeached for conduct that constituted a severe breach of public trust.

The U.S. Constitution provides for impeachment for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors," but does not spell out what "high crimes and misdemeanors" constitute.

Finances: In another phase of "Operation Candor," the President opened up his financial documents for the years 1969 through 1972, which revealed that he paid \$72,686 in Federal income tax the first year and a total of less than \$6000 in the next three years.

During that period, the re-



CHAPIN

port showed the President paid \$74,423 in state property taxes for his California and Florida homes and \$271,350. Both figures were legally tax deductible, as was about \$500,000 which came from his donation of his vice presidential papers to the National Archives.

President Nixon's ownership of a \$100,000 certificate of deposit purchased in September 1969 in a bank headed by his personal friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo remained a point of controversy.

The bank's vice president, Thomas Wakefield, denied any link between the deposit and a \$100,000 cash gift from billionaire Howard Hughes that Rebozo said he kept in a bank safe deposit box for three years before returning it earlier this year.

Plumbers: Egil Krogh Jr. had been charged in Federal Court with two counts of perjury and indicted in California on burglary and conspiracy in connection with the break-in on the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Last week, pleading guilty to a civil rights charge growing out of the 1971 burglary, Krogh had the other charges dropped and hinted

he would cooperate with the Watergate special prosecutor after he was sentenced.

"Dirty Tricks": Another of the men involved with Watergate, Mr. Nixon's former appointment secretary, Dwight Chapin, was indicted last week on four counts of committing perjury in the Watergate scandals. The alleged perjuries were in connection with Chapin's dealings with Donald H. Segretti, who had admitted infiltrating the Democratic candidates in 1972.

Milk Money: Three big dairy cooperatives reportedly made contributions totaling \$422,400 to Mr. Nixon's campaign starting March 22, 1971, three days before a higher milk price support was announced.

Last week the Justice Department, which had earlier on orders from the White House refused to turn over material on the milk contributions, finally released them, saying the Administration no longer claimed executive privilege over the information.