

The Harris Survey

Resigning Favored, 45 to 31%

By Louis Harris

By 45 to 31 per cent, people would "respect President Nixon more if he resigned from the office of President to allow Gerald Ford to take over as President in an act of national unity." Although the prevailing view favors the new Vice President succeeding to the White House, it must be pointed out that this sentiment has not yet reached majority proportions.

The main reasons emerged from a Harris Survey of 1,493 households:

- By 69 to 16 per cent, the public agrees that "because he had nothing to do with Watergate, Mr. Ford could concentrate on solving urgent problems, such as inflation and the energy shortage."

- By 61 to 14 per cent, a majority also agrees that "with his long experience in Congress, Mr. Ford could win the cooperation of Congress in solving problems as President." The public now views President Nixon and Congress as being at loggerheads, reflected in the 77-19 per cent negative rating given Mr. Nixon on his "handling of Congress."

The major source of public reluctance to see Vice President Ford become the President centers on his lack of experience in foreign policy, long Mr. Nixon's strong suit:

- When the statement that "Mr. Ford has had no real experience in foreign affairs, and it would be too risky to trust our foreign policy to him" was put to the cross section, the result is a stand-off: 37 per cent agree, 37 per

cent disagree, and 26 per cent are unable to judge either way.

However, the public feels this foreign policy reservation to the Vice President would be largely overcome if he kept Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State.

The cross section was asked Nov. 13-16:

"Would you respect President Nixon more or less if he resigned from the office of President to allow Gerald Ford to take over as President in an act of national unity?"

	Total Public
Respect Nixon more	45%
Respect Nixon less	31
Not Sure	24

The reasons back of the public thinking on a Ford succession to the presidency were probed in this series of questions:

"Now let me read you some statements some people have made about President Nixon resigning and letting Gerald Ford take over in his place. For each, tell me if you tend to agree or disagree."

	Dis- Asree	Not Asree	Sure
Pro:			

Because he had nothing to do with Watergate, Ford could concentrate on urgent problems such as inflation and the energy shortage.	69%	16%	15%
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If he kept Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State, Ford could handle foreign relations.	67	10	23
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With his long experience in Congress Ford could win the cooperation of Congress in solving problems as President.	61	14	25
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	Dis- Asree	Not Asree	Sure
Con:			

Ford has had no real experience in foreign affairs, and it would be too risky to trust our foreign policy to him.	37%	37%	26%
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Because he has not been elected by the people for the job, it would be wrong for Ford to take over as President.	33	50	17
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It's just not right to have a man as little known as Gerald Ford as President.	25	56	19
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