

# Public Agrees, 73 to 21%, On Nixon Credibility Loss

By Louis Harris

By 73 to 21 per cent, the American people overwhelmingly agree with the statement that President Nixon "has lost so much credibility that it will be hard for him to be accepted as President again." However, the proposition that "he has reached the point where he can no longer be an effective President and should resign for the good of the country" is rejected by a razor-thin 45-44 per cent, with 11 per cent unable to make up their minds.

One reason for this hesitancy on the part of the public to pass final judgement on the President is the 56-36 per cent majority who feels "he is trying to do his best in an almost impossible job." And the public has by no means written off Richard Nixon's leadership capabilities, especially in the sphere of foreign affairs.

A Harris Survey conducted in mid-November among a nationwide cross-section of 1,493 households found the following:

- By 82-12 per cent, an overwhelming majority agrees that "he is not afraid to take decisive action, as in his trips to Peking and Moscow and in his recent handling of the Middle East war." This result is nearly the same as the 81-11 per cent who felt the same in July 1972, shortly after the first news about Watergate.

- By 72-20 per cent, people feel that Mr. Nixon is "experienced and smart, especially in foreign affairs." This compares with 71-17 per cent who agreed with that statement in July 1972.

- By 52-41 per cent, a majority agrees that the President "is right to say it is more important for him to spend his time working for the country than to be trying to find out what happened in the Watergate affair."

If this were all there were to report about the American people's views of their President today, then it might be fairly concluded that Richard Nixon has re-

tained the essential ingredients to sustain himself as a viable Chief Executive. But the erosion of trust caused by Watergate has seriously undermined that hope. And the President's standing on other key domestic issues offers him little consolation.

- By 63-29 per cent, a majority agrees with the statement that "with the Watergate mess, he is no longer able to give the country the moral leadership it needs."

- By 72-74 per cent, the people agree with the charge that "he has not done an effective job in controlling rises in the cost of living," up from the 58-35 per cent who felt that way in February of this year.

- By 64-21 per cent, a majority feels "he and the Republicans are too close to big business," up from the 55-29 per cent who felt that way in September 1972.

- By 49-33 per cent, a plurality feels that "he spends too much time alone, away from the White House, and sees too few people." Back in February of this year, this charge was dismissed by 49-35 per cent.

- By 51-33 per cent, they also refuse to believe that President Nixon is "being unfairly blamed for things his aides did, which he didn't know about."

- By a much closer 46-43 per cent, they reject the idea that "he has been the victim of unfair attacks by the news media."

Thus, the majority of the American people has been badly shaken by the Watergate episode. Yet the public draws back from the critical "impeach or resign" position. Mr. Nixon is somewhat sustained by his reputation on foreign affairs and the public belief that he enjoys the training and experience necessary in a President.