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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *by*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 23, 1975

MEMORANDUM TO: DONALD RUMSFELD

FROM: ROBERT A. GOLDWIN *RAJ*

The enclosed article from Roll Call may be of interest to you. The book from which it is derived is available in the White House library.

Enclosure

*Most interesting - some
good news, some bad.
RAJ*

poll call
1/23/75

Americans Confident of Selves, Not Nation

By Allan C. Brownfeld

AMERICANS ARE remarkably satisfied with their own lives and optimistic about the future, despite the crises of the last two years. They have not lost confidence in themselves as a people or in the American system as a whole. But their confidence in certain key institutions in society—the federal government in dealing with major domestic issues, for example, and the executive branch in Washington—has been badly shaken. These are some of the findings of a special, nationwide opinion poll for the latest Potomac Associates book, *State Of The Nation 1974*, by William Watts and Lloyd A. Free.

The field survey was conducted by the Gallup Organization at the end of April, 1974, using special interview techniques by which individuals rate both their own lives and the state of the nation—past, present and future. Data were interpreted in light of similar studies conducted by Potomac Associates, a Washington-based research group, and the Institute for International Social Research in 1959, 1964, 1971, and 1972.

State Of The Nation 1974 reports that Americans rank their personal status in 1974 exactly as they did twenty years earlier during what is now thought of as the tranquil Eisenhower presidency—a rating of 6.6 on an imaginary 10-step “ladder of life.” Americans also look forward on the average to real personal advance over the next five years, almost

a whole step upward on the ladder from 6.6 to 7.4.

The results are dramatically different, however, when Americans are asked to rate the state of the nation. Potomac Associates finds that over the past five years Americans sense the biggest decline in American national life ever registered, an unprecedented drop from 6.3 to a current low point of 4.8 on the 10-step ladder. Furthermore, respondents to the poll look forward to barely making up that lost ground over the next half decade, with the nation moving upward only a single step from 4.8 to 5.8.

Among the interesting findings are the following:

- While public confidence in the judicial and legislative branches of government remained essentially stable over the past two years—and, for the most part, fairly high—confidence in the executive branch by the spring of 1974 had declined by a shocking 22 points.
- The public's worries and concerns have shifted dramatically from preoccupation with international affairs (the first five concerns listed in 1964) to domestic affairs (the first 16 concerns mentioned in 1974).
- The American people almost unanimously (96 per cent) reject a quota system as a means of reducing discrimination against minorities in hiring or advancement. Even among blacks a remarkably high percentage (83 per cent) were opposed to such favoritism.

• Although Americans felt the nation had made more progress in international affairs than in domestic, the trend over the past decade is toward greater isolationism—a sentiment favored by 21 per cent of those polled in 1974, as compared to only 8 per cent in 1964.

Watts and Frey say that they found Americans generally disheartened by the domestic scene. The public's current evaluation of the situation at home was negative. In most domestic areas, the respondents opposed further intervention by the federal government. One example is that of the regulation of land use.

Respondents were asked, “Taking the U.S. as a whole, do you think decisions about how the land in various areas is to be used in terms of population distribution and industrial growth should be primarily the responsibility of government, or primarily the responsibility of the private sector?” 59% declared that they supported action by the private sector and 11% replied that they didn't have an opinion. Only 30% supported further government involvement in this area.

The pessimism shown about national affairs, however, contrasts strikingly with the positive outlook respondents expressed about their own personal lives, an outlook which Americans have held with remarkable stability over the past decade and a half. Yet the answers have made clear that, for the first time, certain national problems have infiltrated into their evaluations of their personal lives. Any meaningful shift in the future away from the unbroken pattern of personal satisfaction, registered to date, Watts and Free suggest, would rep-

resent a political warning signal of major importance.

In the area of defense spending, while more and more members of Congress urge major cuts, the percentage of respondents who believe that the defense budget should be cut is smaller in 1974 than it was in 1972. In 1972, 37% of the respondents thought that cuts were in order while in 1974 only 33 per cent thought so. The number who thought defense spending should be increased rose from 9% in 1972 to 17% in 1974, with 40% believing that it should be kept at present levels in both surveys.

This volume should be required reading for all politicians. After learning that most Americans want private enterprise to regulate land use, oppose quota systems, and support spending for the national defense—to cite only several examples—one wonders who politicians are representing when they advocate the opposite.

The American people remain conservative, suspicious of big government and its coercive power, and jealous of their own freedom and independence. Watergate has only accentuated this impulse. Unfortunately, the trend toward isolationism is mounting. It is based on the pleasant notion that America can turn its back on world affairs, an idea brought on by Vietnam as well as the seeming ingratitude of a world for which Americans have sacrificed billions of dollars and thousands of lives only to receive vituperation and hostility. In a world made closer than ever, however, such a notion can become a policy only at great peril to all . . .

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 27, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: ROBERT A. GOLDWIN

FROM: JERRY H. JONES 

The attached memorandum was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

-- Most interesting -- some good news, some bad.

cc: Don Rumsfeld