

PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD

*Subsidies . . . Prices
Wages and Salaries*

A Special Report of Two Telegraphic Surveys



NATIONAL OPINION RESEARCH CENTER

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This special report is based on two nationwide spot-check telegraphic surveys made during the week-ends of November 27 and December 4, 1943, respectively. The first survey consisted of 488 personal interviews, the second of 511, -- a total of 999 cases. Statistically, these are sufficient to be within 5 per cent correct 99 times in 100 when the majority is 75 per cent of the total, and within 6 per cent when opinion divides 50 - 50.

S U M M A R Y

Today the question of subsidies is being discussed everywhere throughout the nation -- from the halls of Congress to the corner store. Yet most of the arguments pro and con are above the heads of a large proportion of the American people. At the present time, about half of the nation's adult civilians are not even aware that the government is giving farmers subsidies on certain products.

On the other hand, a large majority of the people are convinced that higher prices mean higher wages and salaries. Most Americans also realize that higher wages and salaries lead to higher prices, and they believe that either move toward inflation would be a bad thing for the country as a whole.

Eight out of ten Americans vote against inflation when the issue is placed squarely before them. For example,

"If the government has to do one of these two things,
which one would you rather have it try to do?

"ALLOW BOTH PRICES AND WAGES TO
GO HIGHER THAN THEY ARE NOW.....11%

OR

"KEEP BOTH PRICES AND WAGES
RIGHT WHERE THEY ARE NOW".....80

Don't know..... 9

100%

Finally, nine persons out of ten think the government should be trying to keep prices from going higher. And more than seven out of ten think it should be trying to keep wages and salaries from going higher.

More people approve than disapprove the government's present attempts to keep both prices and wages-and-salaries from going higher, but in neither case is the approving opinion a clear majority.

MANY PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND SUBSIDIES . . .

Out of every 100 persons interviewed on:

<u>Whether Farmers Need Higher Prices</u>	38	think farmers are getting as much as they should for their products.
	40	think farmers are NOT getting as much as they should.
	22	don't know.
	<u>100</u>	

<u>The Government's Present Subsidy Policy</u>	49	know the government is giving subsidies to farmers.
	7	think the government is NOT giving subsidies to farmers.
	44	don't know.
	<u>100</u>	

<u>The Meaning of "Farm Subsidy"</u>	43	can explain the term "farm subsidy" reasonably accurately.
	20	give incorrect or doubtful explanations.
	37	don't know.
	<u>100</u>	

<u>Subsidies: Pro and Con</u>	44	think farmers should get higher prices for foods they now produce at a loss.*
	42	think farmers should receive government subsidy payments financed by taxes.*
	14	qualify their answers or just don't know.
	<u>100</u>	

*This difference (44% -- 42%) is not significant statistically.

MOST PEOPLE DO UNDERSTAND HOW INFLATION WORKS

B U T

Out of every 100 persons interviewed on:

What Price
Increases
Mean

- 74 think higher food prices lead to higher prices on other things.
- 70 think higher food prices lead to higher wages and salaries.
- 65 think if wages and salaries go higher, then prices, too, will go up.

The Desirability
of Inflation

- 88 think it would be a BAD THING for the country as a whole if food prices should go any higher than they are now.
- 67 think it would be a BAD THING for the country as a whole if wages and salaries should go any higher than they are now.

A N D

What the Govern-
ment Should Do
about It

- 94 think the government should be trying to keep prices where they are now.
- 57 of these 94 persons would include ALL prices;
33 would include only SOME.*
- 77 think the government should be trying to keep wages and salaries from going higher than they are now.
- 19 of these 77 persons would include ALL wages and salaries;
54 would include only SOME.*

Most people tend to consider their own occupations as among the exceptions they think should be made to the general ruling. "White collar jobs" are most often mentioned, with the more specific designation "teachers" a close second. Other responses indicated that most people approve some wage and salary increases for persons employed in less essential lines whose incomes have not increased as a result of special war demands.

*In each case 4 per cent were unable to decide whether price and wage-salary freezing should apply to everyone.

MOST PEOPLE APPROVE THE GOVERNMENT'S GENERAL PRICE AND WAGE POLICY

Out of every 100 persons interviewed on:

Government
Price Control

81 believe the government is trying to keep prices from going higher; -- 10 say it isn't; and 9 don't know.

47 of these 81 persons think the government is doing a GOOD JOB of keeping prices from going higher; -- 28 say it's NOT doing a good job; and 6 don't know.

Wage and
Salary Control

66 believe the government is trying to do something to keep wages and salaries from going higher; -- 14 say it isn't; and 20 don't know.

37 of these 66 think the government is doing a GOOD JOB of keeping wages and salaries from going higher; -- 22 say it's NOT doing a good job; and 7 don't know.

Food Price
Control

56 think that most food prices are TOO HIGH;-- 38 think they are about right; 1 thinks they are too low; and 5 don't know.

HERE ARE THE ACTUAL QUESTIONS
(In the order of their presentation in the report)

1. If the government had to do one of these two things, which one would you rather have it try to do?*

A. Allow BOTH prices and wages to go higher than they are now	11%
OR	
B. Keep BOTH prices and wages where they are now.	80
Don't Know.	<u>9</u> 100%

2. As far as you know, are farmers getting as much money as they should for all the things they produce during the war?*

Yes	38%
No	40
Don't Know	<u>22</u> 100%

3. As far as you know, is the government giving subsidies to farmers at this time for some of the things they produce?*

Yes	49%
No	7
Don't know	<u>44</u> 100%

4. Will you tell me what the term "farm subsidy" means to you?*

Correct	43%
Wrong or doubtful	20
Don't know	<u>37</u> 100%

5. If farmers can't get as much money as they should for some foods they produce, which one of these two things do you think it would be better to do?*(Hand card to respondent.)

A. Let farmers get higher prices for these foods than they do now.	44%
B. Let the government pay farmers something out of taxes so they won't need higher prices.	42
Qualified answer	3
Don't know	<u>11</u> 100%

6. If some food prices do go higher than they are now, do you think this would affect prices on other things, or not?*

Yes	76%
No	18
Don't know	<u>6</u> 100%

6A. (If "Yes" to 6) Would prices on other things go up or down?

Up	74%
Down	1
Don't know	<u>1</u> 76%

7. If some food prices do go higher than they are now, do you think this would affect wages and salaries in any way?*

Yes	73%
No	21
Don't know	<u>6</u> 100%

7A. (If "Yes" to 7) Would wages and salaries go up or down?*

Up	70%
Down	1
Don't know	<u>2</u> 73%

8. If some wages and salaries do go higher than they are now, do you think this would affect prices in anyway?*

Yes	67%
No	28
Don't know	<u>5</u> 100%

8A. (If "Yes" to 8) Would prices go up or down?*

Up	65%
Down	1
Don't know	<u>1</u> 67%

*Interviews made November 25-27, 1943
**Interviews made December 3-5, 1943

QUESTIONS (continued):

9. If food prices go any higher than they are now, do you think this would be a good thing or a bad thing for the country as a whole?*

Good thing	5%
Bad thing	88
Neither	3
Don't know	4
	<u>100%</u>

10. If wages and salaries go any higher than they are now, do you think this would be a good thing or a bad thing for the country as a whole?***

Good	17%
Bad	67
Neither	6
Don't know	10
	<u>100%</u>

11. Do you think the government should be trying to keep prices from going higher than they are now?***

Yes	94%
No	4
Don't know	2
	<u>100%</u>

11A. (If "Yes" to 11) Do you think all prices should be kept where they are now, or do you think some should be allowed to go higher?***

All	57%
Some	33
Don't know	4
	<u>94%</u>

12. Do you think the government should be trying to keep wages and salaries from going higher than they are now?***

Yes	77%
No	15
Don't know	8
	<u>100%</u>

12A. (If "Yes" to 12) Do you think all wages and salaries should be kept where they are now, or do you think some should be allowed to go higher? **

All	19%
Some	54
Don't know	4
	<u>77%</u>

11B. (If "Some" to 11A) Whose wages and salaries would be allowed to go higher?

12. As far as you know, is the government trying to do anything now to keep prices from going higher?***

Yes	81%
No	10
Don't know	9
	<u>100%</u>

12A. (If "Yes" to 12) In general, do you think the government is doing a good job of keeping prices from going higher, or not?***

Yes	47%
No	28
Don't know	6
	<u>81%</u>

13. As far as you know, is the government trying to do anything now to keep wages and salaries from going higher?***

Yes	66%
No	14
Don't know	20
	<u>100%</u>

13A. (If "Yes" to 13) In general, do you think the government is doing a good job of keeping wages and salaries from going higher, or not?***

Yes	37%
No	22
Don't know	7
	<u>66%</u>

14. Do you think the prices you pay now for most foods are about right, or do you think they're too high or too low?*

About right	38%
Too high	56
Too low	1
Don't know	5
	<u>100%</u>

*Interviews made November 25-27, 1943

**Interviews made December 3-6, 1943

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