

WATERGATE AND THE PRESIDENCY

I. Overview



A. Personality of Nixon

1. Defensive, secretive, resentful of his critics
2. An element of mean-spiritedness that undermined his important accomplishments

B. Nixon's view of America and the World

1. U.S. faced grave dangers from the radicals and dissidents
2. His mission - - the creation of a new "structure of peace" in the world
3. Any challenge to his policies seen as a threat to "national security"
4. Any means could be used to stifle dissent and undermine opposition

C. White House Autocracy

1. Public expectations of the president had increased dramatically since W.W.II.
2. But constraints on the office had grown
 - a) Congress was difficult to control
 - b) Bureaucracy (A system of carrying on the business of government) was unmanageable
 - c) Press was suspicious and hostile
3. Presidents sought new methods for exercising of power – stretching or breaking the law

4. **Nixon tries to circumvent Congress**
5. **To overcome bureaucracy virtually all exec. Power concentrated in White House**
6. **Only a few cabinet members retained direct access to president - - advisors exercised his power**
 - a) **H.R. Haldeman – chief of staff**
 - b) **John Ehrlichman – chief domestic advisor**
7. **President became a solitary, brooding figure**
 - a) **Insulated from criticism**
 - b) **Increasingly defiant of the normal constraints of office.**



II. The Break-In

A. Watergate office complex - - Wash. D.C.

1. **June 17, 1972**
2. **Five men arrested**
3. **Offices of the Democratic National Committee**
4. **Washington Post (Woodward and Bernstein)**
 - a) **Researched background of culprits**
 - b) **Former employees of Committee for Re-Election of the President (CREEP)**
 - c) **Paid from a secret fund of the CREEP – a fund controlled by members of the White House staff.**
 - d) **The burglary part of a larger pattern of illegalities, planned and financed by the president’s close associates**

B. Trial – early in 1973

- 1. Federal judge John J. Sirica**
- 2. Senate investigating committee - - Senator Sam Ervin**
- 3. James McCord – a defendant who cooperated with both**
- 4. A floodgate of confessions followed**
- 5. John Dean, counsel to president, leveled allegations against Nixon**

C. Two Scandals

- 1. A general pattern of abuses of power**
 - a) White House**
 - b) CREEP**
- 2. Abuses -- Illegal wiretaps, burglaries, illegal contributions, laundered money, 'dirty tricks' against Dem. pres candidates, schemes to increase Nixon's personal wealth**

D. No Proof

- 1. That Nixon had planned or approved the burglary in advance**
- 2. Attorney General John Mitchell was accused by Dean**
- 3. Mounting suspicion that Nixon involved in cover-up, illegal efforts to obstruct investigations, withhold information.**

E. Mass Resignations

- 1. Mitchell**
- 2. Dean**
- 3. Haldeman**
- 4. Ehrlichman**

F. Tapes

- 1. “Executive privilege”**
- 2. Att. Gen. Elliot Richardson resigned in protest of Nixon firing special prosecutor Archibald Cox who went to court to get the tapes**
- 3. New special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski**

III. Resignation

A. House considers impeachment

B. Supreme Court orders tapes given

C. Nixon resigns Aug. 8, 1974

