

5. NIXON AND WATERGATE



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand reasons for and key features of the Watergate scandal
- Understand the impact on Nixon, US politics and new laws
- Understand why President Ford pardoned Nixon.

On 17 June 1972, five men were arrested after being caught breaking in to offices of the National Democratic Committee in the Watergate complex in Washington DC. However, this was no ordinary break-in. It would lead to a huge scandal that would rock the American political system and lead to the only resignation in history of a president of the United States.

Over a 2-year period, there were many investigations, including those by the FBI, journalists and a committee set up by Congress. These investigations discovered that many leading officials in the White House were involved in illegal activities. The trail even led to the president himself, who had lied and tried to cover up the truth on many occasions.

Watergate had a huge impact, not only on President Nixon, but also on US politics as a whole. Indeed, some effects of Watergate last to this day.

5.1 REASONS FOR AND KEY FEATURES OF THE WATERGATE SCANDAL

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the reasons for the Watergate scandal
- Understand the key features of the Watergate scandal
- Understand why Gerald Ford gave the presidential pardon.

PRESIDENT NIXON

Richard Nixon's long political career began when he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1947. He became well-known during the Red Scare, when he was largely responsible for sending Alger Hiss for trial (see page 11), and he was elected to the Senate in 1950. Nixon served as Republican Vice President under Eisenhower (1952–60) and then ran for the presidency in 1960. He very narrowly lost to Kennedy, but was chosen by the Republicans to run again in 1968. This time he won and became president on 20 January 1969.

ACTIVITY

Write a list describing Richard Nixon's character, based on the text and Extract A. Which of these characteristics would have been positive for a president of the USA? Which of them would have been negative? Would any have been both positive and negative?

Nixon was very intelligent and hard-working, but he could be deeply suspicious, even **paranoid**. He was accused of holding resentments towards people he thought were against him, while rewarding people who showed loyalty. These characteristics played a central role in his presidency and led to his fall.

EXTRACT A

From memories of Richard Nixon by Maurice Stans (who had been Chairman of the CRP, also known as CREEP [see below], in 1972), written in 1987.

He was a man with a brilliant mind; a keen student in evaluating the pros and cons of a problem; decisive when he was satisfied with the facts before him; working at his job all the waking hours; probably the most hardworking President of this century.

He was extraordinarily sensitive to criticism; impatient with opposition; often bitter in defeat; and he was frantic over leaks.

THE WHITE HOUSE PLUMBERS AND CREEP

In June 1971, the *New York Times* published an article about the Vietnam War that was based on a series of secret documents called the **Pentagon Papers**. These documents contained confidential information about the war and had been leaked to the paper by Daniel Ellsberg, who worked at the Pentagon. Although the documents were not personally damaging to him, Nixon was furious that secret information could be revealed by someone in his administration. It increased his suspicion of others and made him worry about what else might be revealed.

KEY TERM

Pentagon the headquarters of the USA's Defense Department

Nixon set up a group called the 'White House Plumbers', whose job was to prevent more leaks of sensitive information. One of their first tasks was to 'bring down' Daniel Ellsberg. In September, some of the Plumbers broke into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist, looking for information they could use to discredit him. They didn't find anything useful, but the break-in showed that the Plumbers were prepared to do anything to serve their president.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

SCANDAL IN 1952

Watergate was not the first scandal Nixon had been involved in. When running for Vice President, he was accused of taking money from his campaign fund for personal use. He went on television and denied all charges in a speech that people called the 'Checkers' speech. Nixon said he had been given a dog called Checkers as a personal gift during the campaign. His children loved the dog and he intended to keep it! People liked what he said and he remained the vice-presidential candidate.

KEY TERMS

primaries (US political) the elections that decide which person will stand as a party's candidate for the presidency

bugging device a small piece of electronic equipment for listening secretly to other people's conversations

SOURCE A

Senator Edmund S. Muskie was the clear frontrunner in the 1972 Democratic presidential primary, when he made a mistake now known simply as the 'Muskie moment'. Muskie broke down and cried in front of reporters after allegations that his wife drank too much and swore in public. Muskie tried and failed to convince the voters that they weren't tears, but melted snowflakes, running down his cheeks. This moment is believed to have led to Muskie losing the presidential primaries.

EXTRACT B

From an article written for the *New York Times* in 2007 by one of the men who broke into the Watergate offices.

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The common public perception is that Watergate was the principal cause of President Nixon's downfall. In fact, the seminal [real] cause was a first-rate criminal conspiracy and break-in almost 10 months earlier that led to Watergate and its subsequent cover-up.

THE COMMITTEE TO RE-ELECT THE PRESIDENT

In 1972, Nixon decided to stand for re-election. He set up the Committee to Re-elect the President (which popularly became known as CREEP) to raise funds for the campaign. John Mitchell, former Attorney General, was made Director of the Committee. What people didn't know at the time was that Nixon gave Mitchell a secret fund within CREEP's budget. It was to pay for the White House Plumbers to spy on and damage Nixon's potential opponents in the 1972 presidential election. They proved successful in this work. Several people who had been hoping to be the Democratic presidential candidate were disgraced. For example, the Plumbers persuaded a newspaper to publish damaging (and probably untrue) stories about Edmund Muskie's wife (see below). He broke down in tears, which is believed to have led to him losing the Democratic **primaries**.

Then, on 17 June 1972, five men were arrested after breaking in to offices of the National Democratic Committee in the Watergate complex in Washington DC. They were caught in the act of trying to repair **bugging devices** that, it was later discovered, had been installed during a previous break-in on 28 May.



THE ROLE OF THE WASHINGTON POST AND FBI IN UNCOVERING THE TRUTH

KEY TERM

White House the residence of the president of the USA. Most White House staff are employed directly by the president rather than being voted for

SOURCE B

The *Washington Post* treated Watergate as front page news from the beginning.



At the same time, the FBI was carrying out its own investigations. They quickly found links to CREEP and discovered that Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy (both White House Plumbers) had played a role in planning the break-in. Gradually, over the following 2 years, the FBI revealed the extent of the campaign to spy on and sabotage Democrats. They also discovered that this campaign had been financed by CREEP. It had received donations from companies and individuals who believed they were donating to help Nixon's re-election through legal means. They had no idea their donations were being used to stage break-ins!

THE 'WATERGATE SCANDAL'

To begin with, most people considered the Watergate break-in to be a bizarre incident. Even when the five men who broke in, and Hunt and Liddy, were proved to be connected to CREEP, most people believed they were acting alone. When Nixon publicly stated that White House lawyer, John Dean, had investigated and found no one from the White House staff had been involved, most people believed him. No one thought that government officials would have anything to do with this illegal activity. Even though the Vietnam War was not going well, Nixon was widely seen as an effective president. It was no surprise when he easily won the 1972 presidential election.

On 8 January 1973, the trial of the five burglars, and Hunt and Liddy, began. They were charged with conspiracy, burglary and wiretapping. Five pleaded guilty and the other two were found guilty. All seven were due to be sentenced on 23 March. Then, amazingly, on 19 March, the trial judge received a letter from James McCord, one of the burglars and Director of Security for CREEP (Source C). It was the contents of this letter that really started the scandal, as McCord claimed that leading White House officials had told the burglars to lie during their trial.

▼ Figure 5.1 The main people involved in the Watergate Scandal

The burglars



James McCord, Campaign Security Coordinator of CRP, former FBI and CIA agent



Bernard Barker, Estate Agent, former CIA agent, who had worked in Cuba



Frank Sturgis, worked for Barker's estate agency, former CIA agent, who had worked in Cuba



Eugenio Martinez, worked for Barker's estate agency, former CIA agent and Cuban exile



Virgilio Gonzales, Locksmith, Cuban exile

Those who planned and directed the burglary



E. Howard Hunt, a White House Plumber and member of CRP, former CIA agent



G. Gordon Liddy, a White House Plumber and member of CRP, former FBI agent

Those involved in the cover-up



Richard Nixon, President of the USA



John Mitchell, former Attorney General, then Director of CRP



John Ehrlichman, White House Assistant for Domestic Affairs and Head of the White House Plumbers



Bob Haldeman, White House Chief of Staff



John Dean, White House Lawyer

SOURCE C

An extract from the letter written by James McCord to Judge Sirica, 19 March 1973.

... in the interests of justice, and in the interests of restoring faith in the criminal justice system, which faith has been severely damaged in this case, I will state the following to you at this time which I hope may be of help to you in meting out [providing] justice in this case:

1. There was political pressure applied to the defendants to plead guilty and remain silent.
2. Perjury [lying under oath] occurred during the trial in matters relating to the... government's case, and to the motivation and intent of the defendants.
3. Others involved in the Watergate operation were not identified during the trial, when they could have been...

SOURCE D

An extract from the *Washington Post* on 3 June 1973.

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One of the strongest charges against Mr. Nixon that Dean has made to investigators refers to a meeting Dean said he had with Mr. Nixon shortly before the sentencing of the seven Watergate defendants March 23, Dean said that Mr. Nixon asked him how much the defendants would have to be paid to insure their continued silence, in addition to \$460,000 that had already been paid, the sources said. Dean, the sources reported, maintains that he told Mr. Nixon the additional cost would be about \$1 million, and Dean also claims the President replied there would be no problem in paying that amount.

SOURCE E

A hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Watergate.

ACTIVITY

There were several different groups and individuals who helped to expose the Watergate scandal. For each of the following, write a paragraph explaining their role:

- FBI
- *Washington Post* reporters
- Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities
- James McCord
- John Dean.

Nixon denied that he had known that the Watergate offices were going to be burgled. On 17 April, he announced a new investigation, led by special prosecutor for the White House Archibald Cox. Then, on 30 April, Nixon announced that he had sacked Dean and Bob Haldeman (White House Chief of Staff), and that John Ehrlichman (Head of the Plumbers) had resigned, due to their part in the burglary and **cover-up**. Meanwhile, the Democrats had persuaded the Senate to run its own investigation. On 7 February, the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities was set up. This was led by Sam Ervin, a Democratic Senator and former constitutional lawyer. In May, the investigation began, with the meetings televised across the USA. The nation was gripped and extremely shocked as people revealed the extent of the corruption at the highest level. The most shocking viewing was the 5 days of John Dean's testimony. He was the first to deliver the huge shock that the president was involved in the cover-up. Nixon refused to be questioned.

THE WATERGATE RECORDINGS

The scandal increased after one of the witnesses revealed to the committee that all conversations and phone calls in President Nixon's office had been recorded since 1971 (as all presidents since Roosevelt had done). A battle began as Archibald Cox and the Select Committee tried to get access to these recordings. Nixon constantly refused on the grounds of national security, because the recordings were about more than just Watergate. He feared it would prevent people speaking openly to the president in private again. In October 1973, he released edited scripts of some of them. The following April, he released more scripts, this time unedited except for where bad language was used (which was replaced with the words 'expletive deleted'). The public were shocked by the extent of the swearing and what was discussed.

ACTIVITY

Are you surprised by what Source D says? Explain your answer.



EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

'EXPLETIVE DELETED'

This phrase was used so many times in the scripts of the Watergate recordings that the public were shocked about so much bad language being used. Protestors outside the White House made fun of the president by holding up signs that read 'Impeach the (EXPLETIVE DELETED)!'.

The fact that Nixon would not allow access to the recordings themselves, and the discovery that some of the scripts had been cut, led the Senate to consider impeaching Nixon. Finally, on 24 July, the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to supply all the recordings. When they were played, there was sufficient evidence on them to show that Nixon had blocked the initial investigation of the Watergate break-in, abused his power and failed to obey the laws requiring him to allow access to evidence. Then, on 5 August, the 'smoking gun' was revealed – a recording from 23 June 1972 which revealed that Nixon had tried to stop the FBI investigating the break-in at the Watergate complex. This proved that he had tried to cover up Watergate from the very beginning. On 9 August, before he could be impeached, Nixon resigned.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A01

A02

SKILLS

PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING,
DECISION MAKING, ADAPTIVE
LEARNING, INNOVATION

'The most important reason the Watergate affair developed into a scandal was the televised hearings of the Senate Watergate Committee.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- the televised hearings of the Senate Watergate Committee
- the Watergate recordings.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(16 marks)

HINT

You will need to read this whole section on Watergate so you can select a variety of reasons to write about in your answer. You then need to weigh up each reason to decide whether the televised hearings were the most important one.

▼ Figure 5.2 Timeline of the Watergate Scandal

- 17 June 1971** 5 people arrested at 2:30 a.m. for the Watergate break-in
- 19 June 1972** The *Washington Post* reports links between the burglars and CREEP. John Mitchell denies this
- 1 August 1972** The *Washington Post* reports that a cheque given to CREEP was paid to one of the Watergate burglars
- 30 August 1972** Nixon announces that John Dean has investigated the break-in and no White House staff were involved
- 15 September 1972** The five burglars, plus Hunt and Liddy, are charged with conspiracy, burglary and wiretapping
- 11 November 1972** Nixon wins Presidential election
- 8–30 January 1973** Trial for the Watergate break-in
- 7 February 1973** Senate creates Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities
- 19 March 1973** James McCord writes to the trial judge claiming White House staff had told the burglars to lie during the trial
- 23 April 1973** Nixon denies advance knowledge of break-in
- 30 April 1973** Nixon dismisses Dean and Haldeman, Ehrlichman resigns
- 17 May 1973** Senate Committee hearings begin
- 25 June 1973** John Dean first testifies. He says Nixon was involved in the cover-up days after the break-in happened
- 7 July 1973** Nixon says he won't testify or grant access to files
- 16 July 1973** White House taping system is revealed
- 23 July 1973** Senate Committee demands the White House tapes and documents are handed over
- 25 July 1973** Nixon refuses
- 9 August 1973** Senate Committee begins a law suit against Nixon for failing to hand over the tapes and documents
- 23 October 1973** Nixon hands over some edited transcripts of the tapes
- 21 November 1973** A gap of nearly 20 minutes on a transcript of a conversation between Nixon and Haldeman on 20 June 1972 is discovered
- 6 February 1974** House of Representatives officially allows investigations on whether to impeach Nixon
- 24 July 1974** Supreme Court unanimously orders Nixon to release all the tapes and documents
- 27–30 July 1974** Investigations decide that Nixon can be impeached
- 5 August 1974** Final tapes are released. 23 June 1972 tape provides the 'smoking gun'
- 9 August 1974** Nixon resigns, Gerald Ford becomes President

GERALD FORD AND THE PRESIDENTIAL PARDON

A few hours after Nixon resigned, Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as president. In his first speech as president, Ford said 'our long national nightmare is over' but, for many Americans, their view of politicians had changed forever. Ford's most urgent job was to try and re-establish some faith in government and the presidency. This was no easy task but Ford's calm personality and honesty did help people to regain some confidence in the government.

KEY TERM

pardon (v) officially allow someone who has been found guilty of a crime to go free without being punished

Ford is remembered for one act above all others and this act is one of the reasons why Ford lost the 1976 presidential election. A month after becoming president, Ford announced that he **pardoned** Richard Nixon for any crimes he may have committed. This meant that Nixon would not face a criminal trial. It was an extremely controversial decision, as millions of Americans wanted to see Nixon brought to justice and there were still things that remained unknown. For example, it seems unlikely, but did the President know details about the burglary before it took place?

There were those who thought that Nixon and Ford had made a deal before Nixon resigned, but Ford denied this. He repeatedly stated his belief that pardoning Nixon was the only way the USA could move on from Watergate. Although it was an unpopular act, pardoning Nixon was probably the best thing to do to try and allow the nation to recover, rather than facing months, if not years, of criminal trials.

SOURCE F

From a speech by President Ford, 8 September 1974.

The facts, as I see them, are that a former President of the United States... would be cruelly and excessively penalized... But it is not the ultimate fate of Richard Nixon that most concerns me, my concern is the immediate future of this great country. My conscience tells me clearly and certainly that I cannot prolong the bad dreams that continue to reopen a chapter that is closed. My conscience tells me that only I, as President, have the constitutional power to firmly shut and seal this book... Now, therefore, I, Gerald R. Ford, President of the United States, pursuant to the pardon power conferred upon me by Article II, Section 2, of the Constitution, have granted and by these presents do grant a full, free, and absolute pardon unto Richard Nixon.

SOURCE G

Protestors demonstrating in Pennsylvania, on 9 September 1974, against Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon.



5.2 THE IMPACT OF WATERGATE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the impact of Watergate on Richard Nixon
- Understand the impact of Watergate on US politics
- Understand the new laws that were passed due to Watergate.

THE IMPACT ON NIXON

The most immediate impact of Watergate was the ending of Richard Nixon's political career. Although he said that he resigned for the good of the country, he really had little choice as impeachment seemed certain. Due to Ford's pardon, he never faced trial, but many people believed he was guilty of planning the burglary as well as covering it up.

The White House recordings did more than reveal the extent of the cover-up. They also showed the reality of life and behaviour in the president's office in a way that had never been done before. Americans were shocked at how the president spoke and thought of others. The phrase 'Expletive deleted' was used so often on the scripts that it became part of everyday language and there were numerous examples of him verbally attacking minorities, such as Jews and Italians. Another issue was that Nixon never apologised or admitted doing anything wrong. He didn't seem to think that he had done anything worse than other presidents had before him. He even appeared to believe that presidents should not be answerable to the law.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

HIDING THE TRUTH

Richard Nixon's character and behaviour had been totally exposed by Watergate in a way that former presidents had never been. Indeed, some aspects of the lives of previous presidents had been kept hidden from the public at least during their time in office. Therefore, most Americans never knew the extent of Franklin Roosevelt's disability – he was only able to walk a few steps with the help of leg braces and crutches. Nor did they know of Kennedy's unfaithfulness to his wife or Johnson's impolite behaviour. Indeed, President Johnson used to have meetings with government officials while sitting on the toilet, with the door open!

There were some important achievements of Nixon's presidency. For example, he led important environmental actions, such as setting up the Environment Protection Agency, and, unlike previous presidents, he managed to enforce the desegregation of schools. In foreign policy, his efforts led to improved relations with both China and the Soviet Union. However, after his resignation, none of these achievements seemed to matter. Everything except Watergate was ignored. His reputation was totally destroyed and people called him 'Tricky Dicky'. ('Dicky' is an abbreviation of the name Richard.) In later years, he did regain some respect. He became a well-regarded author and was frequently invited to give speeches at different events, particularly on foreign affairs, in which he was considered an expert. Future presidents also consulted him for advice. However, most people only remember Nixon for Watergate and he frequently tops polls for the worst or least popular president in American history.

ACTIVITY

In May 1977, a few years after Watergate, there was a very famous series of television interviews with Richard Nixon by the British journalist David Frost. In these interviews Nixon was very open in his replies. If possible, watch some of these interviews on the internet. How do you think the American public would have reacted to them?

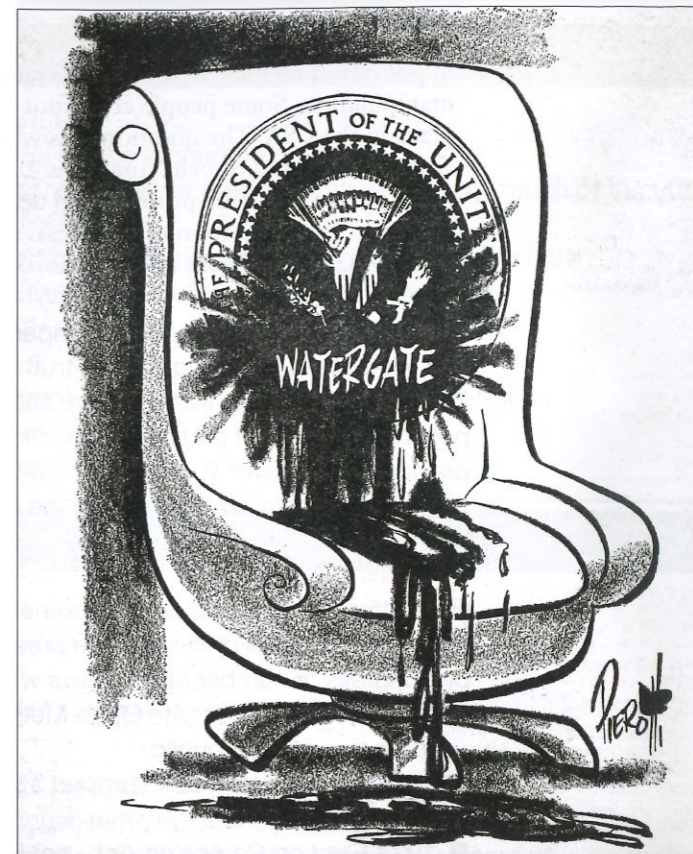
EXTRACT C

From a British newspaper article on the legacy of Richard Nixon, published 4 January 2013.

Substantial as his presidential achievements were, they became completely overshadowed by the dishonour of Watergate. Although Nixon had no foreknowledge of the burglary of the Democratic National Offices by the White House "plumbers", he created the atmosphere in which it could happen. He participated in the cover-up knowingly and lied about it repeatedly. Some of his Oval Office conversations... on the White House tapes [recordings], were unbelievably... sleazy. [These combined horrors were] "a breach of faith" between the president and the American people. This is why Nixon had to go...

SOURCE H

A cartoon published in the *New York Post*, 14 May 1973.



THE IMPACT ON US POLITICS

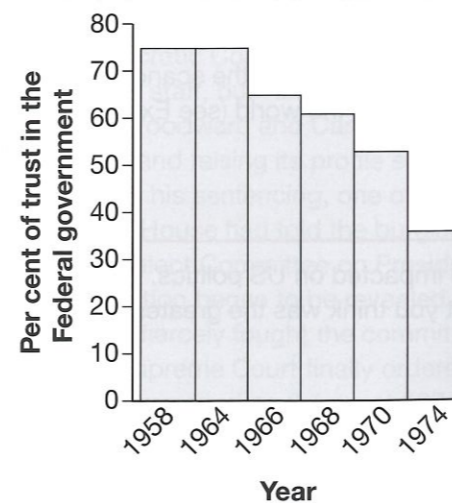
Watergate hit American politics in many different ways, both positive and negative, for the short and the long term.

Nixon may have escaped criminal punishment, but many government officials were tried and over 30 received prison sentences (including all the people in Figure 5.1). This meant there was a massive change in government staff. The Republican Party tried to distance itself from Nixon and his advisers, but still suffered badly at the next elections, losing a large number of seats in the House of Representatives and some seats in the Senate. For the next presidential election, the Democrats chose the relatively unknown Jimmy Carter as their candidate because he was likable, honest, religious and was not seen as part of 'the Washington set'. Carter won the election even though he lacked the skills to be a strong president. Some historians have argued that Watergate has caused American voters to value honesty more than capability in their presidential candidates ever since.

Watergate caused the American people to lose trust in their government. Both Republicans and Democrats were believed to be corrupt and possibly even criminal. In the months and years after Watergate, many politicians began publishing their financial records and opening meetings to the public to show that they were honest. However, the damage had been done. Watergate led to fewer people voting and wanting to become politicians. It also became more difficult to recruit officials to work for political parties or the Federal government.

SOURCE I

The percentage of Americans who said they would trust the Federal government to do the right thing.



EXTRACT D

From a history of the modern world, published in 2001.

... the deeper damage of Watergate was that it undermined confidence in politics. It seemed as if political leadership had been replaced by... manipulation. Some people could not believe that these events were taking place in the USA. The question was whether Nixon was a corrupt one-off or whether this kind of behaviour was an inevitable part of the political system. People feared that the problem ran deep. Stirring up and uncovering scandal became a preoccupation of the press. The confidence and idealism of the 1960s were replaced by doubt and cynicism.

Watergate also had a significant impact on the media. The role of Bernstein and Woodward in finding out the truth was widely praised and many journalists focused on trying to uncover more scandal in the years following. This was positive, as political parties and individuals were subject to more focus than previously. However, it was also negative as journalists were often quick to publish 'scandals' without having the evidence to support them.

NEW LAWS

In an attempt to try and prevent something like Watergate happening again, and in particular to prevent future presidents from acting without the approval of Congress, a number of new laws were passed.

- 1973 House and Senate Open Meeting Rules – all committee meetings had to be open to the public.
- 1973 War Powers Act – stopped a president going to war without Congress' approval.
- 1974 Election Campaign Act – set limits on election campaign spending and contributions.
- 1974 Freedom of Information Act – gave people the right to access any government documents in which they featured.
- 1974 Privacy Act – set rules on how the government could collect information on individuals.
- 1974 Congressional Budget Control Act – set rules on how the president could use government money.

These additional laws have helped, and will continue to help, prevent another Watergate. However, it was also hoped that the changes in legislation would help restore faith in government. This is far more difficult to measure, but Watergate certainly removed the 'myth' about the morality and honesty of anyone holding the office of president. Another outcome of the scandal is that '-gate' has become a suffix for any scandal around the world (see Extend).

ACTIVITY

- 1 Create a mind map of how Watergate impacted on US politics.
- 2 In pairs or small groups, discuss what you think was the greatest impact of Watergate.
- 3 What is the message of Source H?

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

'GATE'

Since the Watergate scandal, the suffix '-gate' has been added to hundreds of other scandals all over the world. Some of the most famous are: 'Camillagate' (1993) for the scandal that happened after the publication of a script of a phone call between the British Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles; 'Monicagate' (1998) for the scandal of an affair between US President Bill Clinton and a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky.

RECAP

RECALL QUIZ

- 1 What was the CRP (also known as CREEP)?
- 2 How many people were first put on trial for the Watergate break-in?
- 3 Name the two journalists from the *Washington Post* credited with uncovering much of the truth behind the Watergate break-in.
- 4 How did James McCord's actions lead to the Watergate affair becoming a scandal?
- 5 What was the name of the Senate's investigation committee on Watergate?
- 6 When did Nixon resign?
- 7 Why did Ford pardon Nixon?
- 8 Name three White House officials, except Nixon, who were part of the cover-up.
- 9 Why were many new laws passed after Watergate?
- 10 What did the Election Campaign Act do?

CHECKPOINT

STRENGTHEN

- S1 Explain why the Watergate affair became such a huge scandal.
- S2 Explain why Nixon had to resign.
- S3 Explain three impacts of the Watergate scandal.

CHALLENGE

- C1 What were the most significant events in Nixon's downfall?
- C2 Explain three short-term and three longer-term impacts of the Watergate scandal.
- C3 What caused the greater scandal – the illegal activities ordered by government officials or the attempts to cover them up afterwards?

SUMMARY

- President Nixon was paranoid about people leaking sensitive information to the press and set up the White House Plumbers to stop this.
- The Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP or CREEP) was set up to raise funds for Nixon's re-election campaign in 1971.
- The White House Plumbers were paid by CREEP to spy on and damage Nixon's potential rivals in the presidential election.
- On 17 June 1972, five men were arrested while repairing bugging devices previously fitted in the National Democratic Committee's office in the Watergate complex. They were quickly linked to CREEP and some White House staff, but Nixon and others repeatedly denied any White House staff were involved.
- Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein from the *Washington Post* played a major role in keeping Watergate in the press and raising its profile so Congress decided to investigate.
- Before his sentencing, one of the burglars, James McCord, told the judge in a letter that leading officials in the White House had told the burglars to lie in court.
- The Select Committee on Presidential Activities began televised hearings in May 1973 and the extent of the corruption began to be revealed.
- Nixon fiercely fought the committee, who demanded access to the recordings of all conversations in his office.
- The Supreme Court finally ordered Nixon to hand over all the recordings.
- Nixon resigned on 9 August 1974 and Gerald Ford became president.
- Ford granted Nixon a presidential pardon, so he didn't face criminal trial.
- To try and restore public faith in the government and prevent another Watergate, Congress passed new laws limiting the president's power, setting limits on campaign spending and setting rules on how information on individuals can be collected.