

39 Watergate

Richard Nixon Back Again 1968!

- Finding the Silent Majority
- The Candidates and the election
- The Results- Conservatism Triumphant
- Wooing the Right, Suppressing the Left
- Nixon and the War
- Peace with Honor?
- Watergate and the End of the Imperial Presidency

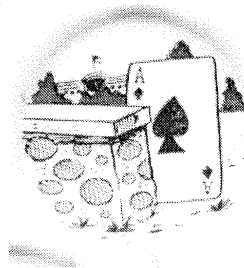
The "New" Conservatives

- shrewd courting of conservative southern whites and middle class with denunciations of liberal permissiveness, counter-culture, hippies, sexual revolution. Nixon Supporters
 - Disillusioned liberals
 - Cold Warriors
 - Libertarians
 - The Religious Right
 - State's Rights Southerners
 - Disaffected Ethnic Americans

▪ The Election of 1968

- opposition to the war grew; it was particularly vehement on college campuses
- in 1967, Senator Eugene McCarthy, a Democrat from Minnesota, launched a bid for his party's nomination based on his opposition to the war
- the Tet Offensive in 1968 and news that the administration was considering a request to dispatch an additional 206,000 American troops to Vietnam dramatically altered the balance of power in the Democratic party

1968 Election (cont.)



- The third-party candidacy of George _____
-- "Segregation now . . . Segregation forever"
- The closeness of this election in the last few months
- Final Result and its implications

- McCarthy won 42 percent of Democrats who voted in the New Hampshire primary
- Robert F. Kennedy entered the Democratic race
- after much soul-searching, Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection
- Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey then entered the contest
- McCarthy and Kennedy each won primaries. After winning a narrow victory in California, Kennedy was assassinated
- DNC meets in Chicago (Daley's Town)

- the Democratic party's convention in Chicago, racked by great turmoil, nominated Humphrey
- former Vice-President Richard M. Nixon won the Republican nomination and chose Spiro T. Agnew of Maryland as his running mate
- Humphrey gained ground, and Nixon won the 1968 election with a popular margin of less than 500,000 votes
- the Independent candidate, George Wallace of Alabama, ran an anti-black, anti-intellectual, and hawkish campaign. He received 46 electoral votes and about 13.5 percent of the popular vote

▪ EARLY SUCCESSES

- Nixon projected the image of calm, deliberate statesmanship
- Détente With Communism
- in the midst of his aggressive actions in Vietnam, Nixon and his foreign policy advisor, Henry Kissinger, embarked on an epic diplomatic venture
- rather than treating communism as a monolith, Nixon and Kissinger dealt with Russia and China as separate powers. Brezhnev Peace Accords
- in February 1972, Nixon became the first American president to visit the People's Republic of China. it enabled the United States to play off the two communist superpowers against each other

- the president signed the Clean Air Act of 1970 and legislation creating the Environmental Protection Agency
- he followed this unprecedented move by meeting with the Soviet leadership in Moscow
- Nixon returned from Moscow with a treaty calling for limiting of strategic arms (SALT)
- it enabled the United States to play off the two communist superpowers against each other (Shuttle, or Ping-Pong Diplomacy)
- by October 1972, Kissinger had negotiated a draft settlement with the North Vietnamese
- shortly before the election, he announced that "peace was at hand"
- Pledges: 'New Federalism'

▪ EARLY FAILURES (economic mostly)

- the most serious issue Nixon faced was the high rate of inflation caused primarily by the large military outlays of the **Johnson administration** and its refusal to raise taxes
- Nixon balanced the 1969 federal budget, and the Federal Reserve Board raised interest rates
- prices continued to rise, however, and in 1970 Congress passed legislation giving the president power to regulate wages and prices with a 90-day wage and price freeze

- phase II of his anti-inflationary policies involved the creation of a pay board and a price commission to limit wage and price increases after the freeze ended
- inflation slowed but did not stop -- "Stagflation"
- Nixon did not pursue a rigidly conservative course
- Nixon's southern strategy sought the support of southern conservative Democrats by pulling back on the federal government's commitment to school desegregation and by appointing conservative justices to the (Burger Court) Supreme Court. --The *Bakke* decision (1978)
- he proposed a bold plan for a minimum income for poor families, which alarmed his conservative supporters and failed to pass Congress

▪ Nixon in Triumph

- Nixon won a landslide victory over Democratic nominee, George McGovern, in 1972
- McGovern's campaign had been hampered by factionalism within his party, his bumbling oratorical style, and his tendency to advance poorly thought out proposals
- Nixon blew huge holes in Democratic coalition
- he won in the South and among northern blue-collar workers

- with his anti-inflationary policies, détente, and prospects of peace in Vietnam, Nixon appeared to be a successful and powerful president
- however, Kissinger's agreement with the North Vietnamese fell apart when Nguyen Van Thieu, South Vietnam's president, refused to sign it
- after attempting to extract more favorable terms from the North Vietnamese by ordering extensive bombing of the North, Nixon finally reached a settlement with the North Vietnamese in January 1973
- the United States lost more than 57,000 lives and spent more than \$150 billion in Vietnam

Nixon gets vengeful

I want the most comprehensive notes on all of those that had tried to do us in... they are asking for it and they are going to get it... We have not use the power in these first four years, as you know. We have never used it. We haven't used the Bureau [FBI] and we haven't used the Justice Department, but things are going to change, and they're going to get it right.

--Richard Nixon, 15 September 1972 --

Nixon's paranoia

- Leaks to the press about Cambodia bombings in 1969 prompted Nixon to order wire taps of press and govt phones
- 'Plumbers' unit set up in WH to discredit Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked 'Pentagon Papers'
- Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP) in 1972 thinks up 'dirty tricks', including bugging Democratic HQ at Watergate complex on June 17

June 17, 1972

During the early morning hours, a security guard notices that an office is being burglarized in the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C.

He calls police. Five men are arrested, including a former CIA agent. All five men are wearing suits, ties and rubber gloves.



Here's what made it strange:



- It was right before President Richard Nixon, a Republican, ran for re-election.
- The office was the Democratic National Headquarters.
- The men were only after file folders. All of the men had large amounts of cash in their pockets, supposedly as payment for the burglary.

- The day after the burglary, a reporter named Woodward wrote a small story about a former CIA agent being arrested in connection with the burglary.
- As part of the story, he called the U.S. Attorney General to ask him if he knew anything about the burglary.
- He was told, "The burglars were not operating for us or with our consent."
- Woodward hadn't even asked that question.



Sept. 15, 1972

- The five Watergate burglars, plus two members of the White House staff, are found guilty of planning and taking part in the break-in.
- In addition to taking files, the men had tried to "bug" the Democratic National Headquarters.
- Since two of the men had direct ties to the White House, Woodward and Bernstein tried to find out more.

Lessons of Watergate



- Crisis displayed the importance of an independent federal judiciary
- Congressional power is rejuvenated
 - War Powers Act (1973)
 - Campaign Finance Reform (1974)
- Public faith in politicians drops dramatically

Carter Ups and Downs

- Economic malaise continues
- Carter too much a manager and not enough a leader; lacked insider knowledge
- More successful in foreign policy
 - Iran hostage crisis saps energy, November 1979-January 1981
- Carter challenged by Edward Kennedy
- Ronald Reagan emerges as forceful Republican, able to sway blue-collar workers—the 'Reagan democrats'

Reagan Era

- Oldest president to take office
- Adopts massive tax cuts along with sharp defense spending increases
 - Supply-side + demand-side = VOODOO economics
 - Staggering budget deficits: \$250 billion/year
 - growing rich/poor disparities
- STAR WARS

- But recovering economy by 1984 brings massive re-election vs Mondale
 - Moral conservatism reveals its appeal among blue-collar voters
- Anti-Communist foreign policy credited with speeding collapse of USSR
 - but Iran-Contra scandal leaves out-of-touch image
 - US has told Ayatollah to NOT release hostages till he takes office
 - In return he will sell Iran weapons
 - From the profits he illegally arms the Argentinian "contra" rebels fighting the "commie" Sandanistas
 - Goes to a Senate Congressional Hearing

George HW Bush

- Successful handover to VP
 - extremely experienced in govt and diplomacy
 - Bush seen as 'kindler, gentler'
 - struggles with aftermath of Reagan deficits, finally agreeing to break campaign promise and raise taxes
- Clearly preferred foreign policy
 - Persian Gulf war leads to extraordinary popularity
- But squandered in 1992 when Democrats stress "It's the economy, stupid!"
- Clinton brings Kennedy-like youth
- Ross Perot sparks support w/ \$ campaign

Clinton Era

- Although minority president, Clinton attempts major initiatives:
 - economic stimulus package
 - gays in the military
 - national health care system (**Hillary in charge**)
 - wins approval of NAFTA
- Backlash in 1994 elections brings 1st Republican majority in House since 1952
 - Newt Gingrich, 'Contract with America'
- Agrees to Welfare reform, July 1996
- Secures balanced budget deal, May 1997
- Easy re-election in 1996; economy booms

The Hormonal President



- Allegations of marital infidelity raised already in 1992 primary campaign
 - Paula Corbin Jones, Jennifer Flowers
- Revelation of relationship w/ Monica Lewinsky (WH intern) leads to new investigations by Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr
 - August 1998: Clinton admits 'inappropriate relationship', but not sex
- December: Clinton impeached by House on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice

Senate trial



- Only second in history
- January 7: 13 House 'managers' present case
 - Depositions played again
- Final vote coincides with Serbia bombing (**Wag the Dog????**)
- Clinton acquitted on both counts
 - perjury: 45-55
 - obstruction of justice: 50-50



Election 2000

- Lively nomination contests
 - Gore vs. Bradley; GW Bush vs. John McCain
 - Consumer advocate Ralph Nader runs for the Greens
- Both final candidates seen as lackluster:
 - Gore is dry, technocrat, intellectual
 - Bush is Texan cowboy, primitive, supported by Repub. establishment because of family connection
- VP choices revealing:
 - Lieberman: first Jewish nominee; Gore avoids Clinton
 - Cheney: fmr. defense secretary and Congressman.
- Major issues: Social Security; spending surplus, tax cuts, WH scandals, 'nation-building' abroad