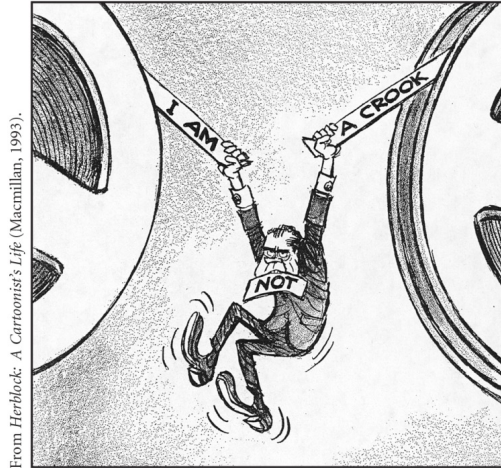


CARTOON 6

Civics Political Cartoon Activity

The Test of Watergate



From Herblock: A Cartoonist's Life (Macmillan, 1993).

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL CARTOONS

Study the political cartoon and then answer the questions below.

1. Why is President Nixon shown hanging by the ends of a broken audiotape?

2. What is the significance of the gap in the tapes created by the loss of the “not” section in his mouth?

3. In your mind, referring to the Watergate burglary and cover-up, how accurate is the charge that President Nixon was a crook? Explain your answer.

ACTIVITY

Write an essay comparing the Clinton impeachment proceeding with the Nixon proceeding. Which one was the most significant for the future well-being of the country?

Discussion Guide

On June 17, 1972 five men were captured by police in a break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate Complex in Washington, D.C. The men were in possession of burglar tools and bugging devices. At their arraignment, one of the suspects described the group as “anti-Communist” and the others nodded in agreement. Connections soon appeared between the burglars, the Committee to Reelect the President, and a small, previously secret, investigative unit said to respond directly to the Oval Office called the “plumbers.” The trail of responsibility for the burglary and the attempted cover-up that followed led to U.S. Attorney General Mitchell, presidential assistants Haldeman and Erlichman, and some 30-plus others who were indicted in the matter. Ultimately the question of the involvement of the president himself came before the prosecutors. They were somewhat stymied until Alexander Butterfield, the presidential appointments secretary, mentioned in an offhand remark before a congressional panel that Nixon had taped all phone calls and conversations in the Oval Office since 1971. Congress then subpoenaed the tapes. Nixon compromised by providing edited transcripts (except for an 18-minute segment of a crucial conversation with Haldeman, which had been mysteriously erased). Congress persisted in wanting the actual tapes of various specific conversations. Nixon, citing executive privilege, resisted. He stated his famous, “I am not a crook” line a few days later, before a convention of newspaper editors in Orlando, Florida. However, three days after the Supreme Court ordered the 64 subpoenaed tapes turned over to Congress, the House Judiciary Committee, on July 27, 1974, voted the first (for obstruction of justice) of three articles of impeachment. Less than two weeks later, President Nixon resigned. His successor, President Gerald Ford, then issued a blanket pardon to Nixon for all crimes associated with Watergate.