

## Describe the Key Features of the Watergate Scandal in the USA

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1972 five men were arrested for trying to break into and bug the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate building in Washington. When investigating this break in, the police discovered that the five men were all employed by CREEP.

CREEP was a committee established by the Republican Party to campaign for the re-election of President Nixon. They were prepared to go to any lengths to achieve their objectives, even if it meant breaking the law.

There were two journalists, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, who worked for the Washington Post newspaper, who got hold of the story. They decided to do a full investigative report into the story.

They discovered that the break in was not the only illegal activity that CREEP had been involved in. CREEP had \$350,000 allocated for dirty tricks against the democrats. Moreover, it was being controlled from the White House.

The election took place in November and Nixon won the biggest landslide in American history. However, Bernstein and Woodward continued their investigations. By May 1973 they had collected enough information to publish their findings. The Senate set up a special committee to find out what had been going on and many of Nixon's advisers were forced to resign.

Nixon claimed he was innocent and did not know anything had gone on and if it had he did not have anything to do with it. To prove his innocence Nixon hired a private investigator called Archibald Fox, hoping that this would produce a whitewash.

Between May and November 1973, the investigations went on, and all the President's chief advisers were involved.

In America, all the hearings were held in public, creating a huge scandal. Like in a court of law, all the President's advisers were under oath, but were lying.

It was discovered that the President had made and kept recordings of every conversation he had ever had in the Whitehouse, while he was in office, since 1971. Even when this was discovered he did nothing to destroy the tapes, simply refusing to hand them over. Eventually, the Court forced him to hand the tapes over in November 1973 and they were made public.

What shocked Americans the most was his swearing. It had become part of his everyday language, but the tapes had been edited when put into transcripts, the swear words were replaced with "expletive deleted."

The scandal had reached the point where many people felt that Nixon was unfit to be President any more.

In July 1974, the decision was reached to impeach Nixon. The Senate would be the judge, the House acting as the prosecution. If he was found guilty he would have to give up the Presidency.

The tapes had proved that Nixon had lied and that he had tried to prevent the investigation, but it did not prove that he had known about the break in.

Kome Emuh  
11H

On 7<sup>th</sup> August 1974 – with the Office of the President coming into disrepute by virtue of the scandal and the impeachment process, a deal was struck. Nixon was given immunity from prosecution and resigned. Gerald Ford became the President.

The Effects of Watergate scandal are as stated:

- Americans lost respect for the Presidency.
- 31 people working for Nixon went to jail. Some people felt it unfair that these individuals went to prison but Nixon did not.
- It added to Americans feeling bad about themselves during the 1970s – the withdrawal from the Vietnam War, a struggling economy, and now corrupt politicians.
- America seemed to be going downhill. This had a humbling effect.

To stop this happening again there was to be a reduction the power of the President. Some of this power was shifted to Congress: the Congress was to be consulted before sending US troops into action Also the power of the Media was strengthened. Using Federal money was to be stopped for personal reasons and the Congress set limits on contributions to presidential campaign funds and allowed private citizens to access any files that the federal government had about them.

But, American's suspicion of their government increased and it was not going to be the same again.