

**COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES**

## On Nixon's Impeachment

In July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee began televised hearings to determine if there were adequate grounds to impeach President Richard Nixon. As you read these excerpts from the impeachment hearings, consider how each of the representatives viewed presidential conduct. Then complete the activity that follows.

### FOR IMPEACHMENT

*Barbara Jordan (D-Texas)*

My faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total, and I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution [lessening], the subversion [overthrow], the destruction of the Constitution. . . . The Framers confided in the Congress the power if need be to remove . . . a President swollen with power and grown tyrannical.

*Elizabeth Holtzman (D-New York)*

Nowhere in the thousands of pages of evidence presented to this committee does the President ask: What does the Constitution say? What are the limits of my power? What does my oath of office require of me? What is the right thing to do? In fact, those thousands of pages bring to light things that I never even dreamed of when this proceeding began. Wherever we looked in this inquiry we found Presidential conduct that was sorry and disgraceful. . . . What we have seen is a seamless web of misconduct so serious that it leaves me shaken.

*Charles B. Rangel (D-New York)*

Some say this is a sad day in American history. I think it could perhaps be one of our brightest days . . . what I think it means to most Americans is that when this or any other President violates his sacred oath of office, the people are not left helpless.

*M. Caldwell Butler (R-Virginia)*

For years we Republicans have campaigned against corruption and misconduct in the administration of the government of the United States by the other party. And somehow or other we have found the circumstances to bring that issue before the American people in every national campaign. But Watergate is our shame. Those things happened in the Republican Administration while we had a Republican in the White House and every single person convicted to date has one way or the other owed allegiance to the Republican Party. We cannot indulge ourselves the luxury of patronizing or excusing the misconduct of our own people. These things have happened in our house. And it is our responsibility to do what we can to clear it up.

*John F. Seiberling (D-Ohio)*

The pattern of conduct revealed by the acts of President Nixon and his associates is unmistakable. [He] was obsessed with the preservation and extension of his own personal power. In the name of protecting his associates and himself, President Nixon was willing to use the powers of the government to destroy anything which he considered an actual or potential threat to his power.

**COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES** (continued)**AGAINST IMPEACHMENT***Edward Hutchinson (R-Mississippi)*

As the trust is placed in Congress to safeguard the liberties of the people through the awesome and extraordinary powers to remove a President, so must Congress's vigilance be fierce in seeing that the trust is not abused. . . . Not only do I not believe that any crimes by the President have been proved beyond a reasonable doubt, but I do not think the proof even approaches the lesser standards of proof which some of my colleagues, I believe, have injudiciously [with poor judgment] suggested we apply.

*Carlos J. Moorhead (R-California)*

When I consider how I am going to vote . . . I have to kind of look to see what kind of a man I think Richard Nixon is and to see who I believe in these proceedings. I have to be sure that the testimony that's been offered has a strong enough probative value to convince me that he had been guilty of a major crime against this country. In each instance as we get back down to the final point, there is a big moat that you have to jump across to get the President involved, and I cannot jump over that moat.

*David W. Dennis (R-Indiana)*

Impeachment is radical surgery on the tip of the cancer which needs therapy at the roots. I am as shocked as anyone by the misdeeds of Watergate. Richard Nixon has much to answer for, and he has even more to answer for to me as a conservative Republican than he does to my liberal friends on the other side of the aisle. But I join in no political lynching where hard proof fails as to this President or to any other President.

*Delbert L. Latta (R-Ohio)*

We can be setting in motion the establishment of a precedent which could have a far greater impact on this country's future than any mortal man can foresee. . . . Wouldn't the mere thought of impeachment by an opposition Congress cause future Presidents to tailor their acts to the wishes of the Congress, thereby weakening the office of the Presidency? . . . I have said before and I say now, show me the hard evidence that the President of the United States is guilty of the many serious charges being leveled against him, and I will show you a vote for impeachment [but] to impeach there must be direct Presidential involvement, and the evidence thus far has failed to produce it.

*Joseph J. Maraziti (R-New Jersey)*

We must present to the United States Senate . . . not suspicion—not theory—not probable cause—but hard evidence to establish the guilt of the President. . . . We have mountains of hearsay and innuendos and *ex parte* [partisan] evidence, and we even have newspaper clippings, newspaper clippings as part of our evidence, on which we are asked to make a judgment. . . . There is no evidence that the President planned the break-in. In regard to the charge that the President participated in the cover-up . . . if I have to choose between Mr. Dean and the President as to who is telling the truth, I have no difficulty in that regard.

**ACTIVITY**

Suppose that you are a radio commentator in July 1974. Prepare for your listening audience a summary of the opposing viewpoints from members of the House of Representatives on whether or not to impeach Richard Nixon.