

IMPEACHMENT--WHAT DO OTHERS SAY?

I. *The following statements represent attempts to further define what constitutes an impeachable offense.*

A. *An impeachable offense is "whatever a majority of the House of Representatives considers it to be at a given moment in history. Conviction results from whatever offense two thirds of the other body considers to be sufficiently serious to require removal of the accused from office." Gerald R. Ford, 1970, then a U.S. Representative*

B. *"Only indictable offenses are impeachable; i.e., offenses against federal law." Judge Simon Refkend, Counsel to Supreme Court Justice Douglas, 1970*

C. *"What is impeachable is not necessarily criminal, and what is criminal is not necessarily impeachable." Sen. Joseph Biden, 1998*

D. *Impeachment was intended "for those offenses which proceed from the misconduct of public men, or, in other words, from the abuse or violation of some public trust. They ...relate chiefly to injuries done immediately to the society itself." Alexander Hamilton, 1788, writing in the Federalist No. 65*

With which statement do you agree? Why?

II. Recent investigations of Presidents Nixon and Clinton have yielded some interesting statements by people involved in the two impeachment investigations.

A. *Presidents should be removed "only for serious misconduct dangerous to the system of government" and not for "general misbehavior." Trent Lott, 1974, when he was a Representative and member of the House Judiciary Committee investigating President Nixon.*

B. *"Bad conduct is enough, frankly." Sen. Trent Lott, 1998, Senate Majority Leader during the Clinton impeachment trial*

C. *"There is no question that an admission of making false statements to government officials and interfering with the FBI and the CIA is an impeachable offense." Bill Clinton, 1974, then a law professor at the Univ. of Arkansas, criticizing his opponent in a congressional race for opposing Nixon's resignation.*

What may have caused Lott and Clinton to make the statements at the time they were made?