

CHAPTER
18
SECTION 2

Section Summary

THE FORD AND CARTER YEARS

At first, President **Gerald Ford** had the support of Democrats as well as Republicans. He lost that support when he **pardoned** Nixon for any crimes Nixon might have committed as President. The pardon was meant to heal the nation's wounds. However, critics accused Ford of having made a secret deal. In the 1974 congressional elections, the Republicans lost 48 seats in the House of Representatives, displaying the public's disapproval of the pardon and the impact of Watergate.

In 1976, former Georgia governor **Jimmy Carter** won the presidency. He was a born-again Christian who won the support of many **Christian fundamentalists**. He was also a Washington outsider with no close ties to the Democratic leadership in Congress. His own party changed most of the bills he submitted to Congress. A day after his inauguration, he granted **amnesty** to Americans who had evaded the draft. He hoped to move the nation beyond the Vietnam War. Severe inflation continued, fueled by the ongoing energy crisis. Carter contended with the oil crisis by urging Americans to conserve.

Two trends continued during the 1970s: the migration of Americans to the Sunbelt and the growth of the suburbs. The Sunbelt's political power also grew. There were many new immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Other trends also continued. The divorce rate more than doubled between 1965 and 1979. The number of children born out of wedlock nearly tripled. The 1970s are sometimes called the "me decade." Many Americans appeared to be absorbed with trying to improve themselves. There was an increased interest in fitness and health.

The 1970s also witnessed a revival of fundamental Christianity. **Televangelists** preached to millions on television. Religious conservatives opposed many of the social changes that took place in the 1970s, forming alliances with other conservatives to create a new political majority.

Review Questions

1. What events troubled Gerald Ford's presidency?

2. How did Jimmy Carter deal with the oil crisis?

READING CHECK

Why were the 1970s called the "me decade"?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Find the word *contended* in the underlined sentence. Note that the word is a verb, which means it names an action. Ask yourself what kind of action President Carter was taking in relation to the oil crisis. Use this strategy to help you figure out what *contended* means.

READING SKILL

Identify Main Ideas How did being an outsider in Washington hurt Carter's presidency?
