

0. ARE YOU KIDDING?! - Story Preface

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Herb Block—who created scathing political cartoons about politicians, hypocrisy and stupid ideas sold to the public as great ideas—published his work in the *Washington Post* under the pen name "Herblock." His life is featured in the documentary "[Herblock - The Black and the White](#)." This image is a still from that production, released by The Stevens Company. Copyright, The Stevens Company, all rights reserved; displayed here as fair use for educational purposes.

Spoofing himself, Herb Block wore a hat that "lit up" when he had an idea. Those ideas didn't stem merely from political stupidity. He also used his pen to ridicule inane public policies and actions. Some of his most famous cartoons fall into that category.

- Government has long been known for wasteful spending. In 1987, the Pentagon disclosed utterly insane price tags for ashtrays (\$600), hammers (\$435) and wing nuts (\$2,043). Block promptly donned Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger with [a \\$640 toilet seat](#). (*Washington Post*; January 25, 1987.)
- Scandals rocked the televangelist community during the 1980s. One could fairly wonder if those involved were more interested in saving souls or [raking](#) in money. (*Washington Post*; March 26, 1987.)
- The heads of America's seven largest tobacco companies told Congress, in 1994, they did not "believe" their nicotine-containing cigarettes were addictive. Two years later, internal corporate documents put the lie to those statements. Block [likened](#) the CEOs to Pinocchio. (*Washington Post*; March 3, 1996.)
- Sentencing guidelines in America often result in drug possessors getting longer sentences than convicted murderers. Block wondered: Is there something [wrong](#) with that picture? (*Washington Post*; November 5, 1999.)
- Technology advances have allowed increasing numbers of people to work at home. In January of 2000, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) made companies responsible for the health and safety of their home-working employees. Recognizing the [absurdity](#) of such a directive, the Department of Labor quickly rescinded it. (*Washington Post*; January 5, 2000.)
- During the race riots of 1967, Block thought Congress was about as useful as Nero who, while Rome burned, acted more like a ["Fiddler"](#) than an emperor. (*Washington Post*; July 25, 1967.)

When Herb Block turned 90, the Library of Congress invited many political cartoonists to honor his 74-year career. Pat Oliphant observed that the *Washington Post*, where Block worked since 1945, had [built](#) its newspaper around him. Mike Peters was a little more direct (and less discrete) in his assessment of Block's [treatment](#) of President Nixon.

Following a long career, [summed up](#) by Signe Wilkinson, Herb Block [died](#) October 7, 2001. He would have turned 92 the next week.

From the first cartoon he drew for the *Chicago Daily News*, on April 24, 1929, [Block practiced what he believed](#). Great political cartoonists don't aim to be fair or balanced. They aim to express what they think - and to remind public servants that they are PUBLIC servants.

Block's estate, mostly *Washington Post* shares of stock, was worth about \$50 million at his death. It funds the [Herb Block Foundation](#), created in his honor, which [helps underprivileged](#) people [via grants](#) and [scholarships](#) (among other things).

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Media Stream



Our Bags are Packed

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Congress, like Nero, Fiddles while Cities Burn

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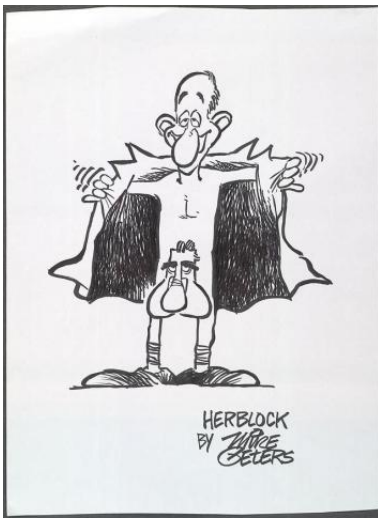


Washington Post Built Around Herb Block

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Block's Treatment of Nixon

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