The World Bank/IFC Archives

Oral History Program

Transcript of interview with

WILLIAM CLARK

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By: Robert Asher
ASHER: Today is October 5, 1983. My name is Robert Asher. I have with me here at the headquarters of the World Bank, William Clark, a British national, who was with the World Bank from 1968 to 1980. William, you came to the Bank as Director of Information and Public Affairs, were then named Director of External Relations, and from 1974 to 1980 you served as Vice President for External Relations. You are one of the most versatile, productive men I know—playwright, journalist, novelist, high-ranking government official, specialist in Anglo-American relations as well as in international development, environmental questions, and other matters. The important positions you have held are listed in Who's Who in the World so I needn't repeat them here.

May I start with a brief question about the beginnings of your full-time association with The World Bank. How much can you tell me about the process whereby you became Director of Information and Public Affairs here at the Bank?

CLARK: Yes, I can tell you all; it is a perfectly public affair, though it is not, I think, on the record yet. I was, in fact, appointed by George Woods, and what happened was this: he and I had been working together on a number of topics, including the idea of setting up a "Grand Assize" to look at the aid effort of the developed world for the developing world. And I had been asked by George Woods, when I was over here for a Society for International Development meeting, to draft a speech for him and for Harold Graves, Director of Information at that time to give to the Stockholm bankers. And it was in that speech that he set out the idea of a "Grand Assize". The speech was written by Barbara Ward and myself. George and I got to know each other quite well and he remained, by the way, a very close friend of mine until the very end; and I always used to see him about once a quarter when I was working at the World Bank.
It was he who rang me up one day and said, "Tomorrow there is going to be an announcement that Robert McNamara will succeed me as President of the World Bank." I don't think at that point that he knew that it had appeared in that morning's Financial Times, and I had read it! So he said, "I would like you to consider whether or not you could take the place of Director of Information when Bob McNamara comes to the Bank." I said that I would certainly think about it; and he said, "When you've thought, come across and see us." And I actually left three days later, not because I was desperately anxious to hold the post--I didn't know enough to say yes or no--but because I thought it was the sort of challenge that one shouldn't hesitate to try out.

So I came across and was taken to the Pentagon to meet Mr. McNamara by George Woods and Dick Demuth. We talked for quite a long time, and I can remember then, as subsequently, that I was my usual, slightly jokey self. This slightly worried McNamara, who, as I remember, when he appointed me a Vice President, said, "There are three things I really must insist on: Don't wear too brightly colored shirts all of the time; don't go to sleep during Board meetings; and don't always make jokes, or you'll be thought to be a clown." I think that was all very good advice, except perhaps about the shirts. I was my usual slightly jokey self, and although I had only met him once before, when I had interviewed him on television during my television days, he and I did click. As George Woods put it, "I think your body chemistry works," and I think it did.

I would like to add a personal note here: I had previously held the equivalent job with Anthony Eden, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and that had come apart because he pursued a policy that I could not go along with, not because of the policy elements, but because of the misrepresentation through the Press Office of what was really going on over Suez. I was quite determined to do two things: I would not let a breach between McNamara and
myself come because of accident. We might disagree, and in that case, we would have to part, but I was game to get as close to him as I possibly could, and I determined to do this. What was quite unexpected was that he became, and remains, my closest American friend—I feel a part of the whole family. It was a perfectly conscious decision that I would get as close to him as I possibly could. I am very glad that I made that decision—for one thing, it is very difficult to get alongside so dominating a character as McNamara without being crushed, although, not because he wishes to do so.

ASHER: But you did have one advantage, didn't you? When McNamara came to the Bank he was known to be an avid reader, a quick learner, a good student and so on; but he wasn't an expert on development. You, on the other hand had had eight years of experience as head of the Overseas Development Institute in London; therefore, you knew more, presumably, about development when you came.

CLARK: That was my dowry; that is what I brought to the marriage: a knowledge of the Third World and of the personalities. That was extremely valuable—its greatest single value was, I think, on our first trip to India, and Bob always says this. I had lived in India for a couple of years, just after Suez, when I went out of the country; and I knew it very well; I knew most of the personalities quite well. We went for a week-long trip around India in, I believe, October, 1968. I stuck very close to McNamara throughout that trip—wrote a broadcast for him, helped with the airport statements, and so on—and we were quite conscious of the fact that for a variety of reasons the relationship between the World Bank and India at that time was very bad. I think that McNamara really turned it around in that first trip for the rest of his career here, and I do think that I was able to play a major part there,
greater by far than usual. He was very grateful for that. It was sheer chance that this was an important country, one that I knew very well, and one of our earlier trips.

ASHER: And you would rate this, therefore, as one of the most successful of the trips. You accompanied him, I take it, on his other trips, too. Were you a part of a larger entourage?

CLARK: No, there was usually an entourage of ultimately a corps of four: Mr. & Mrs. McNamara, the Private Secretary, the Personal Secretary, the Personal Assistant and myself.

ASHER: What about the Regional staff, those in charge of the loans and credits to that region here in Headquarters?

CLARK: That's right. There was always a group, in the end, of six or seven, and of course additions as you went on projects, and so on. Let me make one other point because it is an interesting one. McNamara had something of a reputation for being remote and for not getting to know people in the Bank very well. Nearly all of the people he got to know really well were people he met on these trips. They discovered that he was not remote; they discovered that he was really interested in what they were doing; and he realized what frightfully good material there was in the Bank, and how well they fitted into the scene in the developing country. Although I cannot remember the details of the names, it was really on these trips that he got to know people.

ASHER: Would that be partly because when he was here at Headquarters, he was either so programmed, or programmed himself, that, in a sense, he felt his calendar was full without spending a lot of time talking to people and getting to know them?
CLARK: Yes, it was partly that and partly that when he was at Headquarters, he had a hierarchical view, generally speaking, and he dealt with the people who were in charge. Now in the early days, there were a number of people whom he didn't get on with, and he then used to short-circuit.

ASHER: Can we come back to the Headquarters later, but continue for a moment with the field trips, because I think this is a very interesting part of your joint experience and his education and yours, too. You had a different agenda, to some extent, than he did on the trip; or were you involved in these meetings, all of the meetings with Heads of State, and so forth?

CLARK: Yes, I was usually involved in those meetings. I used to talk a little to the press afterwards, and give them some account, some things, some few items to bite on. McNamara was never a really easy man with the press. I used to have to chance my arm, and he never reprimanded me for doing so, though I know he didn't always like it, and would have preferred doubtful privacy—it wasn't either possible or, I think, desirable, and he accepted my judgement on that. The difficulty, in a way, is that the Third World press, having a world figure like McNamara in their midst, do make banner headlines out of the smallest thing that you say, and this was sometimes embarrassing, but I think we avoided actually getting things totally wrong.

In the first year, we went first to Indonesia, which was not then an active member of the Bank, but became so as a result of that trip, and became a special ward of the Bank under Bernie Bell who was with us on the trip. Incidentally, on that trip we did not have the Private Secretary with us because it was Rainer Steckhan, who was getting married that weekend; the whole trip had been altered in its timing by the assassination of Bobby Kennedy, and he was supposed to have gone off at the end of the trip for his
marriage. Because it was put back, he had to go away. So I acted on this very first trip, with a man I hardly knew, as Private Secretary as well as Public Secretary. Believe it or not, I also succeeded in losing all of our air tickets, or to be more exact, having them stolen from me. I managed to get them replaced and nothing showed, without Mr. McNamara ever discovering, fortunately for me! It was then, also, that I did learn what a kindly person he was, because there were all sorts of difficulties. I didn't know the Bank's rules, nor did he, really, and he still tended to think in Pentagon terms of having his representatives everywhere, which we really didn't have in Indonesia. Well, anyway, that was an especially interesting trip in one particular way: we concentrated on the agriculture programs in Indonesia at McNamara's request, and that was the beginning of something.

After that special trip, I planned for him that we should visit Africa and the Mediterranean region, India and a bit of Asia, and Latin America. We went to all three of the continents before his first year was up. We had been to several of them before the first speech, which was a very crucial speech, and one which I drafted.

I drafted it very largely on the basis of casual remarks that McNamara made—if McNamara ever makes casual remarks—remarks made en passant during these trips, from which I learned what he was thinking about the role of the Bank. I would say that he had a lot of wrong ideas at that time which were corrected; only it's quite false to think that he came in with a plan and imposed it. I happen to remember him saying, "One of our functions in India, our main function in India, is to put horsepower into the hands of the peasants." Secondly I remember saying that I had started a rural development program, which remains today in the ODI and in the University of Reading, and I think is a very good one. And I talked about rural development to him and
he said, "Rural development, that's what Henry Ford was always talking about--'one foot in the factory and one foot in the farm'--it's absolute nonsense!", only that wasn't the word he used. I bode my time, and eventually "rural development" became a good word; McNamara really had some quite false ideas about things.

ASHER: Would you say that any of the trips on which you went were less than successful? If so, in what senses?

CLARK: Yes, I think just taking those first four trips, the Latin American trip. He spoke to the Inter-American Press Association, or Conference, in Buenos Aires, and repeated his strong references to population which he had made in his first speech to the Governors, an absolutely key speech in which he and I were in full agreement and in which he made it an open matter that population was one of the restraints on development. We arrived in Argentina and Brazil to be received as coolly as you possibly could be—not exactly rudely, because that isn't their habit, but with evident disapproval. He repeated these remarks against the advice of several people, but with a warm endorsement of the remarks from Barbara Ward, who happened to see him just before we went off on this trip saying, "You must say that in Latin America; that's where it most needs to be heard." That trip to Argentina and Brazil—Bob McNamara learned a lot from them, I'm sure he did. Incidentally, he met for the first time one of the Bank's Division Chiefs, Shahid Husain, whom he recognized at once, who was oddly enough in charge of Brazil, and it was the beginning of Shahid's relationship with him, which has proceeded so well. I think the trip, though, couldn't by any manner of means be a public relations success, but we went back there, oddly enough, in 1979 in one of my last trips with him, and were greeted by the President of Brazil telling us that when the Pope visited him later in the month he was going to
take him out to some of the slums of San Paulo and let him see how the mothers were asking for the means of contraception because they couldn't bear having these large families. The complete turnaround in Latin America, in private, on the matter of population control, was made apparent by that.

There were several trips in the course of time which were not wholly successful. I can remember calling on, as he then was, President Bokassa of the Central African Republic, later to be Emperor, and he was, in my opinion, criminally insane. McNamara discussed with his cabinet all afternoon the state of the economy, and eventually rather did lose patience, and said to the Finance Minister, "But you can't do that; you must realize that you are really bankrupt," to which the Finance Minister replied with a smirk, "But how can you say that? We control the printing presses."

Anyway, some record of this reached Bokassa, and he decided, instead of seeing McNamara for just a quarter of an hour, which was scheduled, that he would take over the State dinner for him that night, which he did. We had a marvelous dinner, marred from my point of view by the fact that the Finance Minister, who was sitting next to me, received his dismissal from Bokassa in the course of dinner, and I think quite rightly supposed it might have had something to do with his performance in the afternoon, so I wasn't sure that I mightn't be assassinated during the meal. It ended very amicably, with a lot of dancing girls, very scantily clad apart from their high thigh boots, coming in and singing, "McNamara et Bokassa sont frères, sont frères," and dancing around the table. Now was that a success or a failure? It was a failure because we didn't really impress on that government what was necessary. We had one small success: we got the President to sell one of his three 707s for his personal use.
It was not a pleasant trip. It was not a worthwhile government. We did, though, actually get a small rural development program going there to do with charcoal, some way out of the capital, and I think some good was done, and we didn't lose relations with CAR through all its tribulations. That, I, think was a very good thing. I think that anytime the Bank loses relations with a state with which it has active relations, it is a setback, which suggests that we are fair time, fair weather friends. We went around in the course of '69 and '70 to nearly all the African states, which we were really bringing into the Bank, for the first time. This was the beginning, really, of the poverty program, because in the first speech he had said that he was going to double aid in general ways, and always said, "and especially for Africa." Now today, whether one can say that the African Program has been a success or a failure, it's very hard to say; but I'm quite certain that if we had not started then to do something for Africa, they would not have been, in any real sense of the word, members of the international development community. And they still are, and there is still, I believe, an opportunity of saving them from the downward path that they are presently going along—and that really did begin in those visits.

They are very, very primitive states, many of them, and I was impressed, and I know McNamara was, by the extremely high quality of many of the heads of government (not Bokassa, he's a dreadful man). The President of Upper Volta, the President of Niger are two I remember very well—desert chiefs, really, men with a real vision of how they could make their people a more prosperous people, which meant having two sheep instead of one, roughly speaking, but they were really dealing with the realities of all of their people and not just with the modern sector.
ASHER: The Bank is a highly centralized institution, and perhaps we ought to return to central headquarters, because I assume McNamara and you did spend most of your time at Headquarters. As I understand it, you were usually the first appointment on his crowded agenda, and it would be interesting, I think, to record what kind of meetings those early morning ones were: what was discussed, who was there, and anything else you want to tell us.

CLARK: Yes, there was no one else there. I used to turn up at 8:15, having driven in listening to the CBS "Morning News Roundup," so that I knew what was going on in the world, and see him for varying lengths of time, which became shorter as time went on, and was wholly acceptable. In the beginning, it was for an official twenty minutes, which was his usual thing, and they became shorter and less frequent--I didn't always do it in the latter years because it wasn't necessary.

At the beginning, it was quite largely a matter of his raising with me, problems in which he wasn't sure about advice that he had received. I didn't particularly know where the advice had come from. It wasn't testing Burke Knapp's advice against mine or anything like that: it was that in the course of receiving a great number of people whom I didn't usually see with him, he got ideas, he bounced them off me, and I used to chat about them. I had quite a lot to do with the writing of his speeches. For the first one, I did the draft; I never drafted after that. He had Jack Maddux, who was his old draftsman from the Pentagon, had been brought there from a writing job. Always the topic of the speech of that year was a constant matter of discussion, and was for about nine months.

ASHER: Yes, my impression was that it was for the full gestation period for a baby! He started and collected ideas from quite a number of sources.
CLARK: That's right. The question of how to put it together was never very far from our minds, though it would be untrue to say that we were talking in January about the speech in September. But we were talking, and usually had one of our first meetings about the speech in January.

In these early morning meetings we were discussing the problems of the Board—how you could get this across to the representatives of some countries, whether they were the developed world (being too conservative) or the Third World (trying to move too fast); how could you shepherd the Board so as to move them forward together. I think that one of the things that McNamara did use me for was to try and find out, as he himself couldn't by direct contact, what reactions were likely to be to some proposal.

ASHER: Was it difficult to give him a negative reaction from staff, or from wherever you got it, to something which he had thrown out? He wasn't happy in larger meetings when people crossed him, so to speak.

CLARK: No, and he wasn't ever happy with this but he did take it on board, and much more, I think then is generally understood, he adapted his policies to the possible. The complaint of quite a number, particularly of the more longstanding Directors from some of the major countries—Canada, the United States, Britain, Germany—was that McNamara always wanted things exactly his way. What they didn't realize was that if they really wanted to alter something in the Board, they should have talked to McNamara first. They should have made representations in various ways. McNamara did not make proposals without having tried to find out how they would be received. He did not propose things that were all his own way. He would have done things much more extremely (he would have called it "efficiently"), he would have moved faster. He was restrained quite a lot by the views of others, particularly in the early days.
I think our early morning talks, particularly in the first two years, were very largely ones in which I was acting as Intelligence for him about what Executive Directors, senior members of the staff, et cetera, really thought. I didn't usually say which senior members of the staff were saying what, but I'd say that in the staff meetings or staff talk there was a divergence of opinion this way and that; but for Executive Directors, I would always say who they were and what they represented because, as you know, many of them represent a number of countries, which means that they are particularly free to represent their own views, and I used to do that quite a lot.

ASHER: The meetings, as you've described them, were devoted to quite broad issues and strategies, and whom you talked to about what, but you must have had to spend some time on the nuts and bolts of external relations.

CLARK: Oh, certainly. There were two things there: the matter of what we were going to say at the United Nations and so on. Now there, particularly in the later days when I was Vice President, I would get together ideas with Shirley Boskey, who was in charge of International Relations, and unusually, I think, I always tried to take the head of the concerned department with me to see McNamara when we were going to discuss a line to be taken at a United Nations meeting, or a line to be taken in a weekend press seminar by Merriam, who was in charge of the press in my later days. I always used to try and take them with me, and not pass the message through me, because McNamara gives a very strong message, and I think it's a pity to filter it. I used to do that, but very often he and I had had a word about this alone in the morning, during which time I would say what I wanted, and he would say what he wanted. It was usually a matter of his views prevailing, with some modifications by me, which we usually fed through him, and not a
modification of McNamara's statement by me out of his hearing, which I think is right but it didn't always work that way. I sometimes felt, particularly in relation to the United Nations, that we simply couldn't move them along at the pace that he would like to go.

ASHER: Was he interested in the United Nations chiefly to improve its capacity to carry out Bank financed loans, or primarily to build up the general economic and social capacities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies? And in any event, I guess the ACC didn't deal with either of those.

CLARK: The ACC was a rather ludicrous body. He did make one attempt—which I very much encouraged him to do—to get the ACC into a posture where it could review all its ideas for the future. You know, almost every part of the UN has got a program for the next twenty years, and they are mutually quite incompatible, and have never been brought together. He tried to set up a committee to do this; the trouble was, he went to a lot of trouble to put this across and explained it all, and it was agreed that there would be an attempt. Then in the next meeting, three months later, he could not attend and it was left to me to attend. There was great ill-will because they said, "Why, if he is trying to upset things this way, does he run away from it and not carry it on?" The answer to this was that he thought that he had given them a lead, and now would they please carry it on. They never did, and I think to this day that there is very little coordination between what is being planned in UNIDO, and FAO, and UNESCO, and WHO. He was always very sympathetic to the necessary limitations of a grouping of sovereign states, but he did wish to make it as efficient as it could be, and as capable of achieving its objectives as it could be. I would add that he and I both thought the New International Economic Order was a really rather meaningless document; and that unfortunately set us apart from the G77 which dominates the rest of the UN, excluding the Fund.
ASHER: If those meetings were quarterly, then in a dozen years there would have been nearly fifty of them. Surely McNamara didn't attend more than a handful, did he?

CLARK: They weren't quarterly, they were three times a year; but they were really only two times a year and I would have thought that he attended an appropriate day of a three-day meeting for about a dozen.

ASHER: And were the rest divided between you and Shirley Boskey?

CLARK: Yes, and between Mike Hoffman and me before Shirley. One of the difficulties about being a substitute for McNamara is that you aren't! I think that the result was a somewhat intermittent activity on the part of the Bank.

If I may slightly return the criticism . . . Equally it was a slight bore for McNamara to go to New York for an ACC meeting, and find himself discussing pensions of which we are not a part, salaries and communications for a whole morning and then, after a very prolonged lunch, having about half an hour to discuss future courses of action by the UN bodies. Those meetings were not, in my opinion, well organized, and they were not meant to be the high command of the UN; they were the Administrative Coordination Committee, and they really were a housekeeping committee, but it had become so important to try and draw up a strategy that we did try to have influence there.

The real fact of the matter, if I may digress, in my view, was that the United Nations is in a sense a legislature without an executive, and tried to make of the ACC an executive. It was neither responsible to the legislature nor did the legislature control it, because the independent sovereign bodies, like FAO and so on, were not controlled by the UN. So I felt that this was not an effective world government. It may be a good model for a growing world confederation, but not very good because it does not in fact yield to each other a sort of courtesy that is necessary to make such
things work.

ASHER: And McNamara would certainly be as critical as you are of this?

CLARK: I don't like to say, but, yes. He was always, by the way, extraordinarily courteous, but extraordinarily firm. This is true of his dealings with heads of state, heads of agencies, et cetera. I can think of two occasions—going back to the travels—arguing the necessity of speed of land reform with the Emperor of Ethiopia, and the Emperor eventually saying, "I agree, Mr. McNamara, I agree, but I cannot get it through my Parliament." And the second one, the necessity of some financial reforms in Morocco with King Hassan and King Hassan eventually saying, "Mr. McNamara, this is Ramadan and I am too tired to continue." But he did do it.

ASHER: What about, to the extent that you were aware of them, McNamara's relations with various key people within the Bank, and those who influenced him most insofar as you can judge, or would you rather not discuss that?

CLARK: I don't think that I have anything very much to say on that. He had enormous trust in Burke Knapp. They had quite some disagreements of view, but he would never willingly overrule Burke, and Burke would never willingly cross McNamara. With most of his senior staff, he went out of his way to give them their head, but he also went out of his way to give them guidance of what he hoped to see coming out at the end. Most of them, all of them, I think, took that in good part.

ASHER: Now you mentioned a role played by Barbara Ward, an outsider, that is, not a member of the Bank staff. And he kept up a conscious effort to keep in touch with various Barbara Ward types in the world—Maurice Strong and David Rockefeller, who is not a Barbara Ward type, but others. Did you have a role in facilitating those contacts, and a chance to appraise the influence of some of those people, or vice-versa, the influence of McNamara on them?
CLARK: Yes, because the three that you mentioned were all, I think, older friends of mine than even of Bob's. David Rockefeller and I more or less shared rooms at University of Chicago, and we were and remain very good friends. He was quite an influence on Bob, and, oddly enough, he was a very close friend of Barbara's. In the early days of McNamara's presidency, when he frightened the bankers of Wall Street, Barbara and David Rockefeller jointly gave a dinner for Bob to meet the top financial people, and I think Barbara brought in one or two rather more academic characters. It was a great success. It laid to rest a lot of the passion that had been aroused by that first speech and by the fact that, I think it was the Governor of the Bank of Switzerland, had made some very ill-judged and ill-tempered remarks about McNamara talking about population in a bankers' speech, with the result, in part, that a Swiss loan flopped.

In fact, I believe that it was for quite different reasons. We were issuing a Frankfurt loan and a Zurich loan at the same time, and it was obviously much better to borrow from Frankfurt because the Deutschmark was on an upward course at that time, which the Swiss franc wasn't.

There was a moment or two of financial unease about McNamara's radicalism, fanned very much by Barron's Weekly, in that first year, in the fall of 1968. David Rockefeller was very helpful, indeed, as he was to the end, in trying to allay that, and get people to meet McNamara, who is not very frightening when you meet him. He's very impressive and slightly putting down, but he's not frightening.

ASHER: How do you assess the relationship between McNamara and Mahbub ul Haq, and the general problems of having on the staff someone who makes waves—not necessarily intentionally—but causes embarrassment because of the propensity of the press largely to consider as Bank policy anything that anyone who is on the staff of the Bank says, regardless of the number of disclaimers that he includes?
CLARK: I think that McNamara always regarded Mahbub as essentially an ally, because their objectives were similar, in the sense of a poverty-oriented drive for development. He used to get furious with Mahbub for making remarks that were going to be troublesome with Congress. McNamara was a great man for having no one but himself fight Congress, and in that I think he was probably right. Having watched Mahbub for many years—I knew him for many years before he came to the Bank, I thought that the most impressive thing about his relationship with McNamara was that McNamara really used him, disciplined him, and won his undying respect. The amount to which McNamara disciplined Mahbub was very very great, and Mahbub would acknowledge that, at the time, distance lends enchantment. I think that he would have acknowledged that at the time, and I think that McNamara made very, very good use of him, indeed.

He did not like people who made speeches that were going to cause trouble with Congress, because getting either replenishments or what have you through Congress was a continual topic. From the day that I arrived in the Bank until the day I left, there was never a period while Congress was in session without some Bank legislation in committee, on the floor, et cetera. We were always living under the scrutiny of Congress.

ASHER: I want to come back to the problems of relationship with the somewhat undisciplined U.S. government, but let me try to get further views from you on this question of an institution such as the Bank trying to speak with one voice to the public, versus having one or a whole handful of Mahbub ul Haqs on the staff. How do you assess the pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages to the Bank?
CLARK: I think McNamara's view really was that remarks about the Bank should be made by him. I can remember that I wrote an article for The Observer (the paper which I used to edit), and I sent him a copy of what I was about to send off for his comments. He discouraged me from saying it. He said, "I think this will lead to trouble with the Board; they will ask why you should be saying things like this, and why it isn't said by me." I replied, "I really think this is a very good opportunity to say this, and I would beg you to reconsider. Let me go ahead with this article which, if it isn't done by me, won't be done by anyone, unless you care to do it under your own name. This isn't particularly the medium that you would use, I think." He agreed, but reluctantly; he was not much in favor of public statements being made that were not cleared.

ASHER: Doesn't an agency need what current jargon in the U.S. calls a "point man"—somebody out front suggesting things and then the president can disavow them if he wishes to?

CLARK: Yes, but I think that McNamara was his own point man, and I happen not to agree with him on this. I think that he would have been well-advised to have had other people doing this. There are various ways, including getting friendly finance ministers to make suggestions, getting ex-members of the Bank, getting people who have left the Bank recently in mid-career, and he was never very keen on this. He really did like to handle that part of public relations which impinged strongly on the American scene himself. He had for so long dealt with the Congressional issues, you see.

ASHER: Before we leave the subject of Mr. McNamara, and turn more specifically to your own administrative responsibilities, I would like to raise one further point. In your June, 1980 interview ("The World Bank: image and reality", Finance & Development, June 1980), at the time you were leaving the Bank, you praised Robert McNamara as "a man of genius". In an
article in *Foreign Affairs* a year or so later ("Reconsiderations: Robert McNamara at the World Bank", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1981), you gave a more comprehensive account of his stewardship of the Bank, which was also quite laudatory, but you didn't paint him as completely free of faults, and you haven't today. But I would like to ask, with the perspective of another two years, what do you now regard as his greatest strengths and weaknesses, and his contribution to the Bank and to development?

**CLARK:** I think his greatest contribution was to try, from a position of economic strength, to lead the world toward real economic cooperation for the benefit of all; but first of all, for the benefit of the most disadvantaged, a levelling upwards that came before almost anything else. He wished to do this in a voluntary way, not by the imposition from above, but by trying to put the richer countries into a positive position; these are the growth and diversification of the economies in the South.

If I may say so, looking back on the whole period, I might have said that the first five years, til 1973, culminating in the Nairobi speech with its rural development orientation, was the period in which he tried to build a unified world in which the rich were helpful to the poor for the benefit of both. I felt at that time, as we went away from Nairobi, that we really had succeeded in getting somewhere. About four months later came the oil price hike. My personal opinion, and I think probably McNamara's, was that a fairly large rise in the price of oil was only proper, but its net result, particularly in the United States, was to make it seem that the Third World was trying to beat the developed world into submission, and the emergence of the "New International Economic Order" at this time seemed to many people in the affluent societies (affluent, and now having their affluence threatened) to be an attempt to grab and hold, in a non-cooperative way, some of the
wealth of the richer countries. As a result, there has been since '73, and rather accelerated by '79 (another oil price hike), a disinclination on the part of the first world, the developed world, to go along the paths McNamara had outlined. I had the feeling, towards the end, that we were drawing up battle plans which were unlikely to be implemented, because there was no longer the political will to support them. I think that the last five to seven years of McNamara were a battle against the tide, and I can't, looking at the world today, believe that he won it. He didn't.

ASHER: He probably was aware that he was fighting an uphill battle, or wasn't he?

CLARK: He was very well aware that he was fighting an uphill battle. One of the troubles, in a way, was that he won some of the objectives without being able to utilize them. It was a very remarkable affair to be able to double the capital of the Bank without the consenting vote of the United States. That was something of a Dead Sea victory, and it did make impossible his attempt, after my time, to change the gearing ratio. I think that we must accept that, in fact, in the battle with Congress and public opinion in this country, and in the North generally--in Britain and Germany--the impact of the onslaught by the South, as it was seen through the oil price hike, et cetera, was to make the North draw up its wagons in a circle and to try and keep the market economy intact. I have a feeling that we are now in a situation where there is not a North-South dialogue, and there is not progress towards mutual development in the world. I think that this is a bad and dangerous situation, and I think that it is a sign of the failure of a very noble experiment.
ASHER: We can now turn, if you are willing, to your own administrative responsibilities, because I assume that the high priority which you gave to a close personal relationship with McNamara (traveling with him and so on) inevitably resulted in a somewhat lower priority for the daily administration of the sizeable staff for which you were responsible. I want to ask about some of those specific facets of your responsibility, but perhaps before that, give you a chance to comment on your general philosophy of administration and the problems of having a large staff when you have a particular person you want to serve above all. They are not mutually exclusive responsibilities, but they do pose some dilemmas.

CLARK: You're perfectly right. Bob McNamara always used to say, "You're very bright, William, but you are really no administrator." "Manager" is the word he used. It is perfectly true; I am not a good manager, and I never really tried to be. I always delegated the day-to-day work, and the manner of getting things done, to my lieutenants. Now, as an exception, I was very anxious indeed to get maximum publicity for McNamara's first speech to the Board of Governors. I undertook that myself, and I did succeed in getting it published in its entirety in Le Monde, The Times and The New York Times.

ASHER: If I may just ask a question: I do not recall pre-McNamara the availability of the President's speech in a booklet almost simultaneously with his delivery of the speech. Was this an innovation of yours?

CLARK: Yes, it was an innovation of mine. It was intentional, because we realized that McNamara's message each year lasted for about an hour and a quarter, and he never made a speech longer than thirty-five minutes.

ASHER: Well he made very few by comparison with his successor.

CLARK: Very few. And that was also intentional, because he wished his speeches to be rare and important events. I did it that first year, and
by luck as much as anything, and because he was still a very controversial figure, we did get what we needed, which was very widespread reprinting of the text of what he had to say were his plans for the next five years.

ASHER: Was this true of his subsequent speeches to the Board of Governors, or did they fall into place without this comparable effort on your part?

CLARK: They fell into place without a comparable effort. They were often less well covered, and I think that this was probably due to a growing disinterest in the topic in many Western countries, but I think it was also partly perhaps that we didn't try hard enough.

ASHER: When you try, how does one go about getting a McNamara speech printed in Le Monde, for example?

CLARK: I personally called on the Finance Editor of Le Monde. I called on the Editor of The Times. I called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer and gave him a copy, and I spent a day with Scotty Reston of the New York Times in New York (where he lived at that moment); and I did a few other things, including getting it almost entire onto the BBC World Service. It was a matter of detail, and detailed work, and on that occasion with a rather specific audience in mind, which was the developed world. Incidentally, I think it was covered in Die Zeit, where I did go and call on Marion Durnhoff, who is the publisher. This is something that I was quite good at, because I had done it over the years as Press Attaché at the British Embassy during the post-war years, and as the Prime Minister's Press Secretary in 1955-56.

After that first year, I tended more and more to turn over the problems of how we carried the message—not McNamara's speeches, but the message of the Bank—to a very able assistant I had at that time called Lars Lynd, a Swede, and subsequently to Duke Merriam, who was particularly a
Congressional expert. I think it went quite well, but it was done by them. I think my particular contribution was in a way to provide the inspiration of ideas about what we want to get about, and I left to them the question of how to do it. I do feel, in a way, that we remained a little too American-centered in the office in Washington, and we had of course a European office for which I was responsible in Paris. Paris is not an ideal center for reaching the press. I never felt quite happy about that, though in fact we retained a very good image of the Bank in the British press, and that was done from the Paris office primarily.

ASHER: What about your role in the non-press type public relations of the Bank: the publishing of sector papers, research reports of various kinds, and so on?

CLARK: I wanted to get very much more out. Particularly the idea of publishing the sector papers, which was partly mishandled by me, was a very good idea in essence. What went wrong with that was that I was under some pressure from the Bank to publish exactly what the Bank said to itself, and the sector papers were addressed to the Board. As a result, they were not really very readable.

ASHER: But the version that was published was different from the one that went to the Board. It was sanitized, wasn't it?

CLARK: No, virtually not at all. It may have been sanitized in a few things because of actual cases which we wouldn't wish to publicize, but generally speaking, it appeared as it was prepared for the Board. I think that the mistake for which I am responsible, but which was not particularly my idea, was to open our bosom for people to see rather than painting a picture of what our bosom was ideally like! And I also think that a great difficulty is that there isn't much interest in the detail, which is really fascinating when you are inside, of development projects in countries far away.
ASHER: But, in a sense, the sector papers opened the floodgates to a vast quantity of Bank publications on various aspects of development, including some fairly esoteric research, and one who visits the Publications Office of the Bank or looks at the catalogue gets the impression of an all-inclusive cosmic interest in development which is almost too much. Would you like to have seen a more sharply focused publications program, or is the publication of all sorts of research and other products a part of becoming and remaining an important development center, and a source of information on all aspects of development?

CLARK: Hollis Chenery was very influential in this, and he was very anxious to get his research published.

ASHER: Was this for the sake of the author or the sake of the knowledge it imparted?

CLARK: No, for the sake of use. Look, I don't think it's altogether separate from the sake of the author, but it was primarily done because it could be of use. I am inclined to think that we should put out in an unedited and probably mimeographed form more material and make it available to the public, which is beginning to happen properly. We should make a lot available to the public, print and publish more limited stuff that is worthy of selling, capable of selling 5000, copies. I do think that the more that is available to the public, the scholarly public and the professional public, the better.

ASHER: I think I cut you off earlier when you may have had in mind saying more about the Bank's and your role in the Bank's relations with the U.S. government, including all its quasi-autonomous parts, and the role of various people--U.S. Executive Directors, Vice President for External Relations, members of your staff--in complicating or facilitating those relations.
CLARK: Well, it's a rather sad story because so much of our time was taken up with dealing with the U.S. Congress, which is the major subscriber, but is not a dominant force, and should not be in all our thinking and all our actions. We were under some form of scrutiny and objection almost all of the time. Having had two experiences in America--the war-time and the immediate post-war experience, including the passage of the post-war loan and the Keynes mission, to which I was attached--and this twelve years of dealing with the World Bank, I think that America has become very much more inward-looking and, very much less of a leader in world affairs, than it was when I first experienced it; and that makes me very sad.

Secondly, I think that the structure of Congress makes it extremely difficult for the American government to be a leader in world affairs in anything except defense; and I think that, as a result, an aspect of defense, namely that of defending the world against a general dégringolade and a general of stability (an issue which I consider secondary only to the major threat of a nuclear war) is a great danger, and that is not part of the American understanding of the world. I feel that it is difficult to show to the constituency of a Congressman, or even a Senator, that this is in the interest of that constituency; and the capacity for a broad international view, except in matters of defense, is lacking. I can only say that we were not, in my opinion, well-served by American Executive Directors in the Bank. The Executive Directors, in my period, did very little to lead. They were nearly always obstructive, and always for the same reason: "It's going to lead to trouble with Congress."

There was an extremely foolish move, which happened to have no effect on me, which was their attempt to reduce the salaries of Bank and Fund staff with direct reference to complaints from Congress, and saying that we
would examine this and see whether the salaries couldn't be reduced. The American Executive Director fought for this in the Board and elsewhere all of the time, and as you know, the net result of an international inquiry was an 11% increase on the grounds that we were underpaid. It happened the month I left. But that led to a lot of ill-will towards the American government in the staff, and there was a feeling that the Bank was an unpopular institution in Washington. I sometimes wondered whether I mightn't say, in modern terminology, "Perhaps we should sail off into the sunset, and take the World Bank to Frankfurt," (this was never considered). But I never felt in Washington that the World Bank was what is now called a "user friendly institution" and that is very sad.

Now, don't let me exaggerate. In fact we got a lot of collaboration from the American government, including really large donations to IDA and the largest capital subscription, but this was not above the level of the economy of the United States. It did in fact act as a restraint on the Bank going forward faster than it did because neither Japan, nor Germany, nor Britain, nor France was prepared to go faster than the slowest horse, which was always the Americans. This is sad; I don't think it ought to be regarded as irreparable, and I certainly don't think there is anything to be said for trying to loosen the ties between the World Bank and the American people and government; I do think that the American government has an interest in making its relationship and the value that it finds in the World Bank more apparent to its Congress and its people.

ASHER: You mentioned two earlier assignments of yours for the British government in the United States, and these, plus your own general experience, made you one of the few non-Americans in the Bank who really understood the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of the U.S. government, with its division of powers, undisciplined political parties, agencies which didn't
feel it essential to get fully coordinated before expressing their views, and so on. Did you have to spend a lot of time trying to explain these idiosyncrasies to non-Americans on the staff or to the Executive Directors, and how hard a job was it?

CLARK: Yes, it was a hard job. I didn't deal with the Executive Directors; they were dealt with, not very effectively as a rule, by the American Executive Director. I suppose I did deal with them, because they used to come and tell me how badly they thought they had been treated. I explained a little more. Certainly, there was a very very strong movement in the staff to say, "Let's pick up our chips and walk away from here." They didn't consider what that meant, but there was a quite strong antipathy to the American governmental machine in the Bank amongst the non-Americans, and they are three-quarters of the staff. I think that this is one of the quite considerable misfortunes of particularly silly press and Congressional references to our caviar way of life. Most people in the Bank, while certainly well-paid, were certainly very hard-working, and we were not paid as well as Congressmen, as a general rule. The view of the body set up to study the pay structure was that we were certainly not overpaid; it wasn't really whether we were overpaid or underpaid, but that there was the constant sniping about us. Having worked in the British Embassy during the period in which Palestine became Israel, I am fairly used to vituperation and it didn't worry me a great deal; but, I did find that it appalled young professors of economics from the Third World, who arrived to do a job and found themselves being sniped at by the host government; this is all a misfortune.

ASHER: I suppose some of it is inherent in being in the capital of a major stockholder of an institution, but were there crises or strains in the relations with other governments which you had a role in allaying or in exacerbating?
CLARK: Yes, there were some other crises. In the early days, the Germans were just beginning to recognize their economic power, and they tried very hard to exert some muscle in getting more senior postings in the Bank, et cetera. I had quite a few problems with this, and since I knew Germany rather well I dealt with them quite a lot. They were overcome. I think they were natural because Germany was a latecomer in the Bank, relatively speaking, and it took some time for them to assume the roles which they felt they deserved.

ASHER: And they succeeded in some ways, better than Japan, for example, didn't they?

CLARK: Much better; and that is partly because Japan is comparatively unwilling to send people, and the Japanese are not anxious, particularly in their later years (after 50) to live abroad. I think that all of these things are slight difficulties, but one of the very real difficulties was the feeling that the host government regarded the whole institution as somehow or other a nuisance. The British always rather mix into the background in America, but it was very offensive to some Third World people, and very offensive to some of the prouder of the developed countries. It did a very great deal of harm to America's image in the bureaucracy of those countries.

ASHER: We haven't mentioned at all one area of your responsibilities, the Economic Development Institute. It was never an operational arm of the Bank. It always had had some autonomy. Eugene Black was reported to have been extremely interested in it and it was newer in his day; Bob McNamara is said not to have been as interested—in fact, never to have visited it. What are your thoughts on how to reconcile the necessary freedom for this kind of institute with the necessity of making clear that it is a unit of the Bank, that it has the backing and support of top level Bank officials, and that assignment to its staff isn't a kind of dignified form of exile?
CLARK: It was very difficult. I think it was the area in which I
was least successful, and I regard my work there as having been somewhat of a
failure. In particular, I'll mention one thing. A quarrel arose between the
old established EDI and its new bright director, Raymond Frost.

ASHER: Who put him in the job?

CLARK: I did. I did on the recommendation of his predecessor, but,
so to speak, I have never doubted that that was the correct thing. Now, he
had a managerial style which was abrasive and difficult. The thing came to a
crisis when I was abroad, unexpectedly from my point of view. Ray Frost had
always discussed his plans in detail with me; what I didn't know was that he
hadn't discussed them with his staff. When I came back there was really a
sort of mutiny, and I let Ray Frost go. I think, with hindsight, that I would
have been better to have challenged those, to have put my own weight behind
Ray Frost and got him to behave better as a manager.

ASHER: But you would have lost a lot of staff by that, is that it?

CLARK: I might have. I doubt whether I really would have, but they
certainly threatened to leave. I must say that in Mozoomdar, whom I appointed
as his successor, I had a very competent and very healing influence.
Mozoomdar's time there had brought the Institute together again, and I think
that is something for which we should be very grateful. I think, therefore,
that the loss of Ray Frost was a real loss, but the coming of Mozoomdar was a
considerable recompense. I believe the Institute, which has now slightly
changed its status and is more connected to the operational side called
"Projects", is in a happy position.

ASHER: Do you regard it as subsantially changed in its importance
since the days twenty-five years ago when it was one of the few institutes
operating in the field of development? Now, in the 1980's, there are numerous
sources of courses in economic development, training and project appraisal and
so on.
CLARK: Yes, I think it has become, in a sense, less important. I think it has also become, in a sense, a method whereby we spread the knowledge of the extremely effective methods of the Bank to developing countries which are going to carry on on their own. I think its greatest value is in spreading our ways of doing things to countries that are going to do their own thing. And I believe that one of the most important aspects of Bank activity is to ensure that countries can carry on on their own development. I think that the EDI is a desperately important instrument for that. I think its importance is underestimated within the Bank. I'm not certain that it makes a great deal of difference because I think it can do its job perfectly well. But I think that the importance of the EDI as one of the main ways of making countries self-sustaining is very very great indeed.

ASHER: I had another question or two about the EDI, but it is getting late, and I do want to give you a chance to fill in any lacunae in our discussion. I would like to ask you just one question before giving you that opportunity. It relates in large measure to your present job, where you succeeded Barbara Ward as Director of the International Institute for Environment and Development. Has the Bank been sufficiently sensitive, in your view, to the environmental impact of its projects, and to the complexities of what happens when development proceeds either in one of the so-called newly industrializing countries or one of the least developed countries?

CLARK: I think that the Bank has done by far the best job of any development agency in the environmental field, and I think it is quite inadequate. I would just say, anecdotally, that the original decision to set up an environmental group for review within the Bank was taken on my advice. This was in early May of 1968, when McNamara and myself had been here for less than two months. Max Nicholson, an English environmentalist and a great man,
came to me to complain bitterly about an IFC project in Lake Nakuru, Kenya, which was killing all of the flamingos. I took this up quite seriously, because I have a great respect for him, and I took it up to McNamara and said, "Look, I think it is very important that we don't accidentally, by setting up a pulp and paper mill, destroy one of the finest flocks of flamingos in the world, a bird sanctuary, too." He said that he quite agreed, and wrote out a little memo, which he sent to Irving Friedman to carry out, that they should set up an environmental group. I can remember his phrase: "We must have the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval on any project that we put forward." The Bank pioneered this concern.

I think that today, with the population continuing to increase at the levels that it has, we are becoming aware in my milieu that the threat to the world's environment—to its watersheds and to its topsoil—is perhaps the greatest long term threat to ultimate world disaster, apart from the possibility of a nuclear war, and with much the same results as a nuclear war; and I do not feel that that is adequately understood. We set up in the Bank, something again in which I did play a role, the CGIAR, the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, and it has a little institute here, the International Food Research Institute, and there is nothing comparable to that for research into ecology, which is the basis on which food is grown. I am anxious to try and see if something like this can't be done, and I have been talking in the last few days to appropriate people about the possibility of having some such research, because it is vital. Africa is desertifying permanently at a dangerous rate; the Himalayas are being eroded at a very dangerous rate, and a billion people depend on the Himalayan water machine.

ASHER: And forests in Latin America, I take it.
CLARK: That's right, though I happen to think that is a more manageable proposition. Those other two are going along at a great rate, and I do think that this is one of the things that is very important to pay attention to in the future.

If I may conclude with these words: I have been gone from the Bank now for three years, but I still feel that it is the best hope of a decent, cooperative economic world. If it does not keep its fingers on all the pulses that make the world live, there is a danger that no one will. It is the only institution that really has at heart the interests of all people that on earth do dwell, with the possible exception of a small part of the Russian empire. They are technically excluded; for how long I don't know. They excluded themselves by virtue of not having signed the treaty. We are a world institution, and the world depends on the World Bank more than it knows. The United States depends on the World Bank more than it knows, and Great Britain is in the same way. I just hope that we can soon find ourselves restored to an increasing capacity to act in the interests of all of mankind.

ASHER: Well William, we have had a wide-ranging, highly informative, probably exhausting discussion. As usual, you have been insightful and articulate and the result should enrich significantly the records of the Bank. Posterity and I are deeply grateful.

CLARK: Thank you very much.