

WORLD BANK HISTORY PROJECT

Brookings Institution

Notes of interview with

JAMES GRANT

**October 24, 1990
UNICEF, New York City**

By: John Lewis, Richard Webb, Devesh Kapur

FOREWORD

The following are notes of an oral interview conducted by the authors of the World Bank's fiftieth anniversary history: John P. Lewis, Richard Webb and Devesh Kapur, *The World Bank: Its First Half Century*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997. The World Bank Group Archives has neither an audio recording nor a transcript of the interview. Nevertheless, the Archives believes that these notes may be of interest to researchers and makes them available for public use.

In an imperfect world, the World Bank gets a score of eight on a scale of 10.

What the Bank does poorly: It does not do small projects well. In 1955, he asked Eugene Black for a \$2-\$3 million loan to India, and it took about 2-3 years for it to be processed. At that time, \$10 million was a minimum for economies of scale. (What is it now?)

On turning the Bank around: Turning the Bank around is like turning the Queen Elizabeth in the Hudson. In 1985, UNICEF drew up a plan for child immunization in China, which is only now being implemented. Basically, the lead-time for projects are very large. At UNICEF, where 80% of the staff are field-based, ideas can be developed and implemented in 2-3 years. UNICEF is to the Marines as the World Bank is to the Army--quick, but little horsepower.

The World Bank has a weak in-country staff, therefore they are much less in touch with the goings on on the ground in the countries. Basically the World Bank is a much more remote institution. UNICEF has few resources, thus, it basically acts as a catalyst. The World Bank can use its weight more, although it still must leverage resources to policy.

Education: Within education, the Bank spends little on primary education, even though by 1980 it had recognized that payoffs were maximized by investments in primary education. But still, there were few changes in actual Bank practice. The head of the World Bank can use his position as bully pulpit. Therefore, by roping him (as well as the Managing Director of the IMF [*International Monetary Fund*]), e.g. at the Bangkok, "Education for All" conference, resources can be more easily mobilized.

Adjustments: Adjustments with a human face. People at the top in the World Bank and the IMF agreed with UNICEF, but with both organizations, the transition was very laborious. These issues are not simply structured to make it in the decision-making calculus, i.e., the top guys don't have an opportunity to rule on it.

World Bank and other international organizations: The Bank has the Banker's arrogance. [*Alden W.*] Clausen was amenable to the Bellagio Child Survival Task Force, as well as to basic education. Now [*Barber B.*] Conable threw his weight in for the Bangkok conference. Without the Bank, initiatives would not get off, even though at the lower echelons of the Bank, it takes a while for these initiatives to get accepted.