

**Summary of Oral History Transcript**

Bennett , William L.

Interview conducted by Professor Robert W. Oliver, on 1988-01-20

William Bennett came to the Bank in January '49 as Financial Editor, on loan for one year from the New York Herald Tribune where he was bank editor. He came at the invitation of John McCloy, to publicize the Bank, and deal with the rating services and other groups assessing the quality of securities. At the same time, Rupert Fuller was hired to handle the press. By the end of the year he was offered a permanent position by Robert Garner, then Vice President and General Manager of the Bank.

Bennett covers Eugene Meyer's brief tenure as first President [June'46-Dec'46], his disagreement with the US Executive Director Emilio Collado and Sir James Grigg the UK Director over the Board having executive power to run the day to day operations of the Bank, and Meyer's subsequent resignation. The circumstances under which McCloy was nominated and the conditions under which he agreed to become second President of the Bank, bringing along Black who replaced Collado as US Executive Director, Garner as Vice President and General Manager, and E. Fleetwood Dunstan as Marketing Director. This group ran the Bank from March'47 to approximately July'49 when McCloy left to become UN High Commissioner in Germany, Black succeeded him as President, Dunstan returned to Banker's Trust, and Garner stayed on and finally retired in 1961 as President of the International Finance Corporation.

Bennett elaborates on the Bank's bond ratings, the efforts made by McCloy and his team to raise the Bank's visibility and to establish its credibility as a lender. The various loans made, mainly the first reconstruction loan to France in May'47, those made to other European

countries, the first development loan to Chile in March '48, and the expansion in development lending in the '50s. He covers in detail Woods' personality, his affiliation with the Bank prior to becoming its President, his nomination by President Kennedy in 1962, the Woods era and the expansion of agricultural loans. More importantly, Woods' relationship with the Board, the IDA problems and his battles with the US administration and congress, his handling of the media and the staff involved, his feelings about being reelected as President, and his rapport with Eugene Black. Bennett assesses Woods' thorough knowledge of the Bank and the relevance of bringing him as President, his involvement in the choice of McNamara as his successor and President Lyndon Johnson's subsequent nomination of him in Dec.'67, as well as the reaction of the Board, staff, and media to McNamara's appointment.

Finally, Bennett talks about Woods recommending him to McNamara resulting in his appointment as the Bank's representative in New York as financial relations advisor, and opines on the pros and cons of IDA's set up within the Bank.