

THE WORLD BANK GROUP ARCHIVES

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH

**LEIF CHRISTOFFERSEN**

Interview By: John Heath

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October 12, 2016

[Transcribed from a digital sound recording]

The following is a transcript of an interview conducted for a special oral history project on the McNamara years. The project, led by John Heath from 2016-2018, was a partnership between the 1818 Society and the World Bank Group Archives to capture a social history of the experiences of staff during President Robert S. McNamara's tenure (1968-1981).

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## INTERVIEW

**HEATH:** It is October 12, 2016. We're here at the Bank Archives in Washington, D.C. My name is John Heath on behalf of the World Bank Group Archives' special oral history project on the McNamara years and I am here today with Leif Christoffersen.

Mr. Christoffersen, it's a pleasure and honor to have you with us today and I want you to feel that the direction of this interview is very much in your hands. I'm not going to micromanage it in any sense, but we could maybe logically start at the beginning. I appreciate very much the notes that you sent me. I see that you originally intended to work for the United Nations.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** That's correct.

**HEATH:** But your professor at Tufts, at the Fletcher School introduced you to the idea of the Young Professional Program and you subsequently ended up working for them.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right.

**HEATH:** So, I wonder before this professor mentioned the Bank to you, had you heard of it? What perception did you have of it?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, Eugene Black came to our graduate school and gave various talks that eventually ended up in a book called, *Diplomacy of Economic Development* and the proceeds of that book was used for scholarships at my graduate school and I got one of them. So, I knew from having heard Eugene Black talk about the Bank, and also therefore reading his book when it came out, a year after or whatever, and so that was my first introduction to the Bank. I had never heard about the Bank before that time.

**HEATH:** Right. Why did you change your sights from the United Nations to the Bank?

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*Verbatim*

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, I already had an unsigned contract for the U.N. in New York, the Norwegian mission to the U.N. had opened doors for me with the personnel department down there before my professor recommended the Bank, and I even had signed on their side a contract that said I should go to Kampala, Uganda and work for what was then called the United Nations Technical Assistance Board, the pre-runner to the UNDP.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I said, that's going to be one of the star choice assignments, because it's one of the best assignments in Africa, so we are very happy to give you this opportunity. And I was about to do that when my professor said, well, wait a minute, before you decide, you should go and be interviewed. I have already nominated you, recommended you, to the Young Professional Program. So I said, I don't really want to work for a bank, and he said, no, no, no, this is a development agency. So, he put me on the path that this was a development agency, not just a bank. Then he said, they have very good people working down there.

I did not sign the contract with the U.N. until I had my interviews to see how that going and I spent two days down here in Washington, being interviewed in early 1964, I think in February 1964, and what convinced me, more than anything else was the quality of the people that I met in the Bank. The salary level was about the same I would get in the U.N., but in the U.N., I found that there were some really good people and some not so good people. So, it was a very up and down the scale type of quality of people that worked there. In the Bank, I just felt it was a solid lineup of really excellent professionals and I was very impressed with that. That probably more than any other single factor decided me to take the Bank.

**HEATH:** Do you remember the names of the people that interviewed you?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Gerry Alter, Latin American, head of Latin America department, and then Richard Demuth, head of Development Bank department and I think [Alexander]

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Stevenson, who was then head of the Asia department and then [Richard] Van Wagenen who was the personnel person in charge of the Young Professional Program. He was a Dean at American University.

**HEATH:** Now you said that when you were introduced to the Bank by your professor, he insisted it wasn't a bank, it was a development agency.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right.

**HEATH:** Some people would argue that before McNamara, it was really more of a bank than a development agency. Do you think that was the case?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I don't think it was at that (inaudible). I'm a great admirer of McNamara as you know, but I think that the Bank had already begun to move into development phase when they started the education unit and the agricultural, because that was different from the typical infrastructure and development work that we did before, which was much more banking. I held that and so I don't think it was that sharp a division. I think that McNamara was coming into a Bank that was already moving in the direction of being a development agency. For one thing, IDA had already been established before he got there and that was for the lowest income. That was not for the high return that that type of project that Wall Street were particularly interested in.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** So, I think, I think that it was a smoother transition than a sharp.

**HEATH:** But would it be fair to say before McNamara the focus was all on economic growth and not really on poverty reduction? Or did you see also that the Bank had moved in that direction before McNamara?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, I think it was, I think that when I worked in the agriculture division, my first assignment after the YP Program [Young Professionals Program], we largely dealt with commercial farmers.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And so the poverty thing was absolutely new with the Bank, with McNamara.

**HEATH:** Even though Theodore Schwartz' book, *Transforming Traditional Agriculture* that came out in the '60s, so, but I noticed from one of your previous interviews, you said that FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization], for example, in those days was very much geared to commercial farmers and didn't really believe that small farmers could be productive. I was quite surprised to see that.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** There was a long story, but after we published the, after the Bank published its, issued its policy paper on rural development.

**HEATH:** That was in '75.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** '75, it sort of hit the world, all the donor agencies were interested. They felt that this was a path breaking new thing. The FAO director-general came, sent a letter to McNamara. I didn't work with McNamara then, but he always brought me in on discussions, so one day he said to me -- I was then head of the rural development division, come and see this letter from the director-general of the FAO. And so he said, I think that you should set up, because they U.N. had something called the IACC, Interagency Cooperative something, they want to set up a task force in rural development where interagency collaboration should then address itself to the issue of rural development like the Bank had done in the rural development

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policy paper.

McNamara asked me, what do you think of that? I said, no, no, no, we shouldn't take it because FAO is -- we have lots on our shoulders already, we have more than enough to do. It's good for FAO to take on this. So, I drafted the letter for McNamara to sign and he sent it back to [Addeke Hendrik (A.H.)] Boerma, B-o-e-r-m-a, Director-General of FAO at the time and said I think you should take it. The Director-General had sent a new letter back. That caused uproar in the FAO staff because it said that no, we, I as Director-General at FAO think that we should insist on this because we don't have the staffing capacity to do this kind of work.

I agreed to that we would do it on one condition. I said, we're going to do a rotating, each agency one year each. I became the first chairman of the United Nations interagency task force on rural development and we ran it for one year and then it was subsequently, through the ILO and WHO and eventually the FAO and whatnot. But in that period when we were working with rural development task force, it was very clear that in FAO there was no strong understanding of small farmer problems. Poverty to them was a welfare function and they felt that they were into technical agriculture, which was very much commercial farmers and large-scale farmers and that the economics of this was clearly in favor of large units.

We argued that indeed small farmers could be economically viable and contribute to economic growth. FAO at that time, and they said this straight to my face in 1976, is that we don't believe that any farm size less than 200 hectares in most developing countries is economically viable and we did not think a fisherman was economically viable unless he had a 28-foot boat with an outboard engine. Clearly, the sentiment was not, I mean the idea of small farmers and poverty orientation was a dramatic new thing in the U.N. system.

**HEATH:** Going back to the time you were division chief in West Africa, you covered Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and you were particularly looking at -- was that agriculture, no it wasn't agriculture.

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, that was across the border.

**HEATH:** Right, I see. At that time, was there, did you have a sense in the agriculture sector that most of the staff in the Bank wouldn't believe in small farmers? I mean they would have the commercial farm bias? I mean was that still the case?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No. I think that by that time, we had Hollis Chenery's book that you referred to. The fact that you can have growth with redistribution and that small units, industrial units, agricultural units could be viable. That message was coming through the Bank. Was there opposition to it? Yes, some, but I don't think it was a very opposition to it. I think most people that I encountered seemed to think that this was exciting that they could work with something that was new, pioneering and open up opportunity to be much more broadly involved in development than the Bank had ever done before.

**HEATH:** Right. Of course, a bit later, continuing the theme of agriculture, a bit later in your career, '73 to '76, you worked in the rural development division. I should say you headed the division, working under Monty [Montague] Yudelman. Tell me something about your reflections from that period.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well I think that Monty Yudelman was instrumental in bringing about something that McNamara was looking for -- evidence from research and field work that small farmers could be economically viable. He provided that evidence to McNamara and McNamara grabbed it and ran with it. He said that's what I -- and that it also can happen in Africa because some people said that Africa was so far behind that it's hard to imagine that. But Monty had done a lot of work on small farmers in Zimbabwe, Rhodesia and South Africa and he had also -- so he came with that message and that was a very powerful message.

**HEATH:** He was South African, is that right?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Originally, but he was naturalized American when the nationalists took over in South Africa in 1948.

**HEATH:** Right. Now, in that period in your career from '73 to '76, you first got associated or began testing, as you put it, the integrated rural development (IRD) concept?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yes. That's probably one of the most misunderstood, I think, issues in the Bank's history, because the rural development policy paper never argued for a strong expansion of integrated rural development projects. It's nowhere in the policy paper.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** They talked about an integrated approach, but it was always a question, should that be at the policy level where you bring it together, or could you in fact prioritize it into a project structure? We were set up in the central part of the Bank, Agricultural Development Bank outside the region. The regions didn't even want to test this. Initially, McNamara's hope had been that the regions would say we can test it. When they said no, we don't want to do that, he established that unit with Monty Yudelman and I headed that. My primary job was to take that concept of integrated rural development and test it and to see whether it was something that the Bank should continue doing.

Here was a strange thing because we worked with this and it was very complicated work, but we had a lot of fun working with it and trying it. There was a lot of interest in it. There was enormous amount of co-finances, donor agencies, all over the place wanted to do co-financing with us and be a part of it. It became such a prominent feature of what the Bank was doing, that the other agriculture division of the Bank became very jealous. They said, I remember it was Bob [Robert] Picciotto or whatever, he was head of agriculture in the South Asia department at that time, he said Leif, you are not the only one who is going to get the glory of working with

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integrated rural development, we are all going to test it ourselves.

Now, whether it was Bob or somebody else, but there was certainly an agriculture division chair. My feeling was we were taking this very complicated thing, testing it before anybody else tried it and then IDA replenishment came into the picture. IDA replenishment negotiations found that Europeans were overwhelmingly in favor of this kind of concept and that they wanted to do more of this.

**HEATH:** Before you go any further, could you, for the layman, could you define what you understand by the original conception of integrated rural development.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** That we would work just at not outside the agricultural sector, we will bring in these other factors that could bring about development at the local level, meaning education, infrastructure, health, nutrition, whatever it takes. Not necessarily predetermined in advance what it was, but to explore what are the other factors beyond agriculture that can get a rural community going and become viable.

**HEATH:** So the small farmer as such, was that the focus of IRD, or not really?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** It was the focus because in order to address the small farmers, we felt that we had to work at the local community level in order to bring them together. Otherwise, they had very little support. At the national level, they, the big, the government was more interested in big farming, the private sector is more into -- so they had to work and see whether we can assist small farmers through this approach at the local community level. So it was a rural community development approach in a way.

**HEATH:** But it required enormous powers of coordination between these different line ministries and these different sectors. I mean was that perceived as a problem?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Absolutely, it was a problem. But then the question was, if it couldn't be done at the central level, because there were jealousies and ministries fighting each other, the hope was that at the local level, there would be more pragmatism around those issues and because they were closer to the beneficiaries, and the beneficiary would have more say in trying to make that happen at the local level. Therefore, we would overcome the traditional jealousies of the ministries at the national level.

**HEATH:** But at this early stage, there wasn't a conception of community members defining the subprojects and from a fairly broad list of options. It was more top down. Is that correct?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In a way, I mean to some extent, yes. But we tried to build in a participatory mechanism in all of the projects. But it was up to the government really to whether they allowed that to happen. I do recall that for example, in several of the African projects, we had people with participation expertise who went out with our people, and tried to listen to what the villagers had to say and tried to bring their perspectives in, in the preparation of the projects.

At the end, it was of course, the national authorities that made the final decision as to whether they wanted to listen to that and it was up to us to judge whether we can, very often they would accept some, but not all. And was that good enough to proceed and we often gave the benefit of the doubt that we got some progress but not full progress and we worked--

**HEATH:** Now, you say your job was to test out the concept.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah.

**HEATH:** The concept that wasn't actually in the '75 rural development strategy but McNamara was keen on the idea. Is that correct? And he pushed it?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He wanted to test it. I don't think he necessarily saw that that would

necessarily be the case. I think that, otherwise, I think he would have gone for a much broader approach from the beginning. We were a small division in the center, and we had certain -- we were, we had to work with the regions to take certain projects in different parts of the world to test them.

**HEATH:** Just to understand, you were separate from the agricultural rural development division or?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In the regions.

**HEATH:** Yes, in the regions.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah.

**HEATH:** Yes, yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** So, the projects, each of the regions had the project department, and each of the project departments had an agricultural division. We were outside all of that.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** We were a global rural development division.

**HEATH:** Okay. So, when you say test it, which countries did you test it in to begin with?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** We tested it in Tanzania, we tested in Mauritius, we tested it in Cameroon, in Mexico, Northeast Brazil, Indonesia, and a few other places.

**HEATH:** Where did you start? Which country was first?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, there was several at the same time, but I think that the Mauritius and Tanzania experiences were among the first because at that time, the international community was listening very much to what [President] Julius Nyerere had to say, and he had written some beautiful things about rural development that was beautiful on paper and beautiful --

**HEATH:** Yeah, Arusha Declaration was '67 I think it was.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Something like that.

**HEATH:** Yeah, right, okay.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He sort of was very keen that we should be involved in Tanzania from the beginning.

**HEATH:** Was this the personal chemistry between him and McNamara or was it more--

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, I think it was, I think it was a strategic testing of the Bank by Julius Nyerere, because he sent a letter to McNamara and said can you immediately send people to my country to help with the preparation of the project, and I need 28 people, all really top-notch. As it happened to be, 28 was the number of staff I had in my division at that time.

**HEATH:** So he, maybe he knew that?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He knew that, and he was flaunting it, testing it, yeah.

**HEATH:** I see. I mean this is an out and out socialist. So, what was the reception that this letter got in a Bank that was still, you know, regarded as--

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, we said we just can't do that. We'll start with one region and that's Kigoma. He wanted us involved across the board in all the regions. In the meantime, when they didn't the Bank involved in more than one, the Germans got involved in one, the Norwegians in one, the Swedes in one, the Dutch in one, everybody lined up and then the other regions.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** It was a -- everybody ran into Tanzania because they want to be a part of what Julius Nyerere had put it on paper, which was actually quite good. I was impressed with his wording, but there was a big gap between the reality on the ground and what he said to the international community. And that began to gradually unwind.

**HEATH:** Right. Let's talk a bit about Kigoma, specifically, I mean the Ujamaa Program is sometimes translated as villagization and some people would say that it, initially Africans were not terribly excited about moving into these newly created settlements and there was an element of coercion which does remind you a bit of what happened in Vietnam with the strategic settlements that people like Samuel Huntington promoted. So, was there a security underpinning to this do you think on Nyerere's part, or was it purely facilitating access to infrastructure in a more rational way?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I think it was socialist thinking in the broader sense because I mean the Russians had done that with their agriculture. They had forcefully moved small farmers into larger units. Iran, the Iranian government at that time had moved a huge number of farmers into what they called farm corporations in the late '60s, early '70s. So, it was a move across the board to move people in because they felt that they needed to have the advantages of large-scale economics, I guess. So, I think it was that more than security, in my view.

**HEATH:** So Nyerere was a believer in the economies of scale in agriculture in that case, wasn't

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he?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Absolutely.

**HEATH:** Absolutely?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And you can see that also when he was, when you look at, gradually when our sector reports and the country reports in Tanzania get to dig into how the Tanzanian government used its budget. They used it for large industrialist states and for talking to foreign investors to come in on their term, the Canadians come in and did the 3,000-hectare wheat area north of Dar es Salaam somewhere. So, what they were doing with their own money was not to put it into small scale or rural development. They were letting the donors do that and they were doing the big scale.

**HEATH:** Oh, I see. Right, okay. So, there was in a sense, a bit of a contraction with the '75 strategy paper. Kigoma came after '75, yes?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah.

**HEATH:** And in this strategy paper, you were saying that small farming was the way to go. So tell me something about how the Kigoma experience went. Was there much resistance from the village people in this region?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well that, I mean we knew from other areas of the world irrigation schemes were set up that when you move people, there's always some opposition. So, it was very hard for us to judge how, the extent to that opposition was. That was very hard for us to judge. In retrospect, probably an area that we didn't do good enough work. I think that what happened was, the Bank was very much concerned that this was a risky endeavor. I remember when they went to the -- I presented the Kigoma to the Board of the Bank, and the day before we

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had a loan committee meeting under Burke Knapp, the senior vice president at the time, said call me afterwards, and said, Leif, should we really do this Kigoma project? And I said, it is high risk but we are supposed to take some risks and I think we should go ahead with it on that basis that we are willing to take some risks.

**HEATH:** So, would have this have been in '76, or which year would this be?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** '76, I think, yes.

**HEATH:** '76, okay.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah. He said okay then, said Burke, and then he agreed and then it went to the Board. So, it was on my -- he was expressing doubt, but he gave me the benefit of doubt that it would be worthwhile to test it and to have the risk explored. Shortly after it had passed and we were moving on, within six months something dramatic happened and that should have shook us up more than it actually did. The government decided to dismantle all cooperatives in Tanzania. The appraisal of Kigoma was billed that the cooperatives would be the institution at the local level that would handle both inputs and the marketing of produce. Now suddenly, you had big parastatals coming in, providing inputs in their particular crop in and out, so that you have an enormous amount of transport costs added to this whole equation and, determined by people at the parastatal level not by people at the local level. There was discussion in our division is that enough to say we should stop this project.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** It was only six months into the project, and so we decided that the whole world now by this time were looking at everything we did. So, if we pulled out there now, it would be enormous political repercussion.

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**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** To give an example, International Fund for Agricultural Development had just been established, I think. I don't know when they were started, maybe '78.

**HEATH:** Yeah, a bit later.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But they are one of the first projects that they advertised as their project was the Kigoma project where they co-financed with us. They hadn't done anything themselves. They took a slice of the Kigoma project several years later, '79, '78, '79 and still felt that this was one of their choices things to show the world that they were doing good work in agriculture development. So, it lingered beyond this period quite a lot because in the whole period from '75 and up to the late '70s, at least a five-year period, there was an enormous enthusiasm for integrated rural development that went way beyond my expectations.

**HEATH:** Yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I thought to myself, what am I doing with this division if I'm supposed to test something before it is released? But everybody jumped on the bandwagon and it became, it doesn't mean that integrated rural development was a mainstay of the Bank's work in agriculture, no. I wrote an article for the IMF World Bank paper at that time, and I showed statistically that in the period from '75 to '79, there was something like less than 12 percent, if I recall correctly, of all agriculture projects were classified as integrated rural development. So, it was not a major thrust of what we were doing, not at all. But it was the one that caught everybody's attention because it sort of appealed to the good common sense idealism that this was something that would be exciting if it worked.

**HEATH:** In Kigoma, were there any signs of coercion of scattered people into villages, being forced into villages when you were there?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** We were not aware of any military removal of villagers. I carefully looked at some of the reports. We have no evidence ourselves that we witnessed that. So that was something that gradually came through other channels and we heard about it. But initially, we didn't hear about it. I think there were two things we were trying to do. One is to try to work with the parastatals and see if we can work a better logistics because it didn't make sense to have all these trucks coming in and out to the villages and the cost multiply enormously, and really, quite frankly undermine the economic rationale of the project.

Within some of the old agriculturalists said well, let's just see if we can get them to accept common sense views and I remember Andrew Mercer who was one of the old Afrikaans in my division, and lived in Africa, Kenya, Malawi big parts of his professional life, he said okay, we can tell, if this is a village and they are moving people into villages, we have to find out if they have water resources and whether their soil quality is good enough to support a larger establishment. So, we're going to have to drill here, up two opposite ends of the village, to test the water supply system, how much water there is. Is there enough to feed the village and then we're going to do scattered around that, soil test, find out whether the soil quality could be judged good enough for increased livelihoods and food for the village.

That was our approach, to go in and say okay, let's try to test this and show through empirical means that things were wrong. You had to change it, you had to divide it up or you had to begin to approach it differently. We wanted to show by being constructive, but at the same time putting our fingers on things that we know that they hadn't done their homework.

**HEATH:** Was there pushback by the Tanzanian government?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Not really. They sort of accepted it. I mean what is interesting is that by this time, integrated rural development had moved into the prime minister's office. And the prime minister's office accepted, but what the agricultural department minister did it wouldn't

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surprise me if there was -- I don't know because the PMO, the prime minister office was very political; maybe in retrospect. I don't know whether there was opposition to what we heard, but we certainly presented that, and they accepted that we should go ahead on that basis.

**HEATH:** How important was the peculiar chemistry between McNamara and Nyerere in terms of getting Kigoma going and continuing?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I can say that at no point in the Kigoma project history did McNamara intervene with me.

**HEATH:** I see.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Never.

**HEATH:** Right. Okay.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In fact, he was very interested in hearing what was happening, and I was embarrassed at one point in time. He had to give some plaques to the ten-year staff and he said I see you are one of them, so it must have been in--

**HEATH:** '74.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** -- '74.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Or was it later, was it -- anyway.

**HEATH:** You said in your previous interview it was '74, yes.

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** '74, yeah, and so anyway, he wanted to hear about the work we were doing, so anyway. I had been with McNamara when he first met Julius Nyerere in Tanzania in 1970, and the chemistry between the two of them was not good.

**HEATH:** Oh, really?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No.

**HEATH:** I see. Interesting.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But it changed. The issue at stake was that we were coming in to Dar es Salaam and we were told that the government was very upset with the World Bank, not because of agriculture, but because we did not support the Chinese railway that was being built for Dar es Salaam down to Zambia. We argued that it would be better to expand the highway, the economic road, their journey would be better, and they felt that they would be chastised for having brought the Chinese on board to do this.

So, when we came in, I remember McNamara came into the cabinet room in the president's house and Julius Nyerere was there, it was, the reception was ice cold, ice cold. Nobody smiled, nobody. McNamara was smart enough and I think, he turned to Julius Nyerere and said, Mr. President, now that you are building the railway to Zambia, what is your next priority in terms of national development? From what I can see from our side, and we are just suggesting, it would be expansion of the port facilities in Dar es Salaam would be needed, and that changed things, immediately, that ice cold feeling, I said my god, this guy is not coming to chastise but he is coming to give a constructive...

I remember then, when Julius Nyerere and McNamara walked out of the room, Julius Nyerere was, they were holding hands, now then there was some chemistry for sure. McNamara said, I

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have enjoyed reading your speeches, and then Julius McNamara turned to McNamara and laughed, and said, yes, but I have to keep in mind that that's one thing is to write something, another thing is to do it.

**HEATH:** Yeah, right. Just finally on integrated rural development, are you aware of any of these projects that could be described as being reasonably successful, anywhere in the world?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Successes, many, for example, what was happening in the PIDER program [Investment Program for Rural Development] in Mexico, which was micro regions at the national, that I think was important and successful in a sense that in a prior to PIDER, the ministry of agriculture would only deal with irrigated agriculture in Mexico, they weren't interested in rain fed agriculture at all. Most of the micro regions were rain fed, and they were forced through this system to become more involved. I talked to some of the Mexican hands recently and they said that was a turning point, the ministry of agriculture after PIDER is now addressing both irrigated agriculture and rain fed agriculture.

They consider that a success of the program. I think it was very effective in terms of showing what ministries, what you can do with integrated, if at the policy level, people were really interested in monitoring this. I know each week, each of the micro regions had to report back to the office of the president what was happening, and then the president would also meet with the ministers who had their own channel coming back, so he had a double check on what the ministers told him actually took place in the micro region. It showed what could be done when you really had intention at the policy level to making sure that the integration took place.

In Northeast Brazil where I spent some— I think that the integration itself perhaps did not— we tried to work with some bigger— we dealt with individual states in the Northeast, and I think that Northeast at that time had gotten little attention.

**HEATH:** I understand that Gerry Alter was actually opposed to going into the Northeast.

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He was opposed to it, yes.

**HEATH:** Why do you think that was?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, he felt, the government that he dealt with was not keen and he would then have to be a lobbyist for doing something the government didn't want to do.

**HEATH:** I see.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** When McNamara's idea two projects in the south and one, whatever it was, two to one or three to one, and McNamara knew Gerry was not happy. But he did it.

**HEATH:** Of course, that Northeast program I think was reinvented I think in the 1980s, rather outside our period, but they tried to make it into more of a demand driven process.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yes.

**HEATH:** Did you follow that experience at all?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No.

**HEATH:** No? Okay.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, I didn't.

**HEATH:** All right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In Africa, there was an interesting development, I think in Mauritius—Success is success. I mean one of the things I learned in evaluation work is it is hard to know

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success unless you go back ten or 15 years later, because in the short run, meaning when the project stops, it is too early to determine anything. I've been to projects in Africa, a project here is in Africa many years later, if a project that was not successful and I've seen things happening on the ground, things are happening.

In the one case, I asked how long has this been, was at livestock auction in Northern Kenya, how long has this been, oh, it's always been there, my father was involved in this, blah, blah, blah. There was no mention of the World Bank involved, and I know because I was there that we had initiated it.

**HEATH:** Interesting, right. Well, it's been a fascinating discussion about agriculture. Let's retreat a bit to other issues. One thing I'm interested in pursuing is the idea of how the Bank changed before and after McNamara. I mean we could begin perhaps by, maybe you could tell me something about whether there was a clear old guard in the Bank, let's say associated with people like Burke Knapp and Warren Baum to what extent they resisted the new direction that McNamara was bringing in. I mean was there a lot of tension? Did you feel it in those days between the old guard and the new guard?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Let's start with Burke Knapp. Burke Knapp to me was one of the most commendable people I ever met in the Bank. At no point in time did I see him at odds with McNamara. Even if he might have his private moment, he may have said it to others, but there was never a confrontation between Burke and Bob on this. Burke was a gentleman, an incredibly good person who was trying to build bridges all the time. He was not into divide and rule type of thing, which some of his successors tried to do, so I don't think so.

I think that there were pockets of the Bank that wanted to go back to the old style of doing projects. Meaning you took the time, the necessary, and McNamara really rebelled against this and I remember I was also not surprised that he did. We had an infrastructure project coming up, and it was all ready to go, almost, and it was supposed to be put on the Board agenda, and then

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the vice president for the Bank and said well, it's not ready yet, and McNamara said it's not ready, what do you mean? Well, the world's foremost expert is on vacation in Australia with his family and he's not coming back for three months, and we want to have his opinions before we go forward. McNamara said, what? Are we holding a whole project waiting for that just because you want to have the opinion of one single world expert? Many people in the old days felt that was a good way to do it because we were never under pressure, and by the time we actually surfaced it, we had done all the homework.

**HEATH:** So, when it came to control over the technical substance, the quality of the projects, was there some compromise do you think, when McNamara came in?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** The only compromise I can think of is this. I remember talking to him about that, he said, development, developing countries have a growth rate of zero to one or two percent; industrialist countries at that time had much higher. Our project rates of return were 10, 12, 15, 20 percent, he said, aren't we too perfectionistic? Can't we reduce the high returns a little bit and get a much broader effect and maybe you have 100 projects that are getting seven or eight percent rather than two that have 15 to 20 percent?

So, a little bit of that probably took place in terms of being willing not necessarily to go for the highest return, because you weighed what the development impact would be on people, which it hadn't done before. Looking at people and weighing those options against various rates of returns of projects, that I think was, I think that some of the old guard were not comfortable with.

But I would say in my work, I never experienced a great opposition to it. When I was division chief for many years, in rural development division, none of the old guard came to me and said what you're doing is wrong, none of them, even though, even in private dinner parties.

**HEATH:** When you say the old guard, who actually, can you name some names of people you would associate with? Or is that inappropriate?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, I was just thinking, I mean [Richard] Dick Demuth who is head of Development Bank, he was conservative, and he wanted to have development banks done properly. I think the work that he did was very good because in a way he was ahead of his time. Development institutions at the local level, building that infrastructure out was very important for national development. But I don't think he, at the technical level, I mean Jim Evans who was head of agriculture at that time, I don't think he was that comfortable, but he was not in opposition. I mean I had worked as a young professional under Jim. I had been his personal assistant almost for almost a year, and he never came with any sort of strong feeling that what we were doing were wrong. But it was just something it was something he hadn't any experience with and couldn't really follow.

It was more that we left them behind rather than that there was a deliberate group of people trying to oppose what we were doing, from my perspective.

**HEATH:** Right. So, a broader sense, I mean you joined the Bank '64. In the period after you joined to the end of the '70s, what were the sort of main cultural shifts you say in the Bank? I'm not talking so much about the— I'm talking more about the, in terms of the composition of the staff, in terms of the possible tensions between different groups in the staff, anything along those lines that comes to mind.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well I think that two things come to mind immediately. One thing is that the gender issues became much more pronounced and I think -- I remember once I was, one of the secretaries, one of the vice presidents came to me and said Leif, you know McNamara, you should know what's happening to me. I am being chastised by this chief secretarial something in the personnel department for wearing pants to work.

**HEATH:** And which year would this have been roughly?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** '76, '77.

**HEATH:** Right, okay.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I was not about to go and talk to McNamara about this. But what I did do, I called up the personnel director, Reg Clarke and said, Reg, I hear that there are some people that are being chastised for wearing pants. In today's world, that's not something we want to have coming up to higher levels of management is it? Reg said, no, you are absolutely right, Leif, and from that time women could come with pantsuits. That was a small demonstration, I mean a small token of the fact that we were beginning to address issues that had hurt women.

You also saw that in terms of more young professionals are women, you saw the first beginning of female managers coming into play because it was men, with a few exceptions, it was a gentleman's club originally. On the gender issue, I think we moved and also—

**HEATH:** Just on that point, I mean when it came to missions, am I right in saying that at some point, there was almost a rule that women professionals didn't go on missions, or am I wrong?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, no. I have never experienced that. In Mexico missions, Northeast mission, Tanzania mission, I had women on all of them.

**HEATH:** I see. In terms of the relationship between men and women in missions or more generally, I mean how did that evolve over the time?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I would say, from what I recollect is that it was a very good professional relationship and that everybody behaved very nicely. Maybe some of the women were being provoked sometimes, but it was certainly not an issue that came to my attention and I had some very strong women working for me, people who later went on to do other things at the Bank.

I was not aware that, but I can't speak for the whole Bank, but in terms of my experience, I had the feeling that it was not a problem with having women on mission. If one of my female [staff] had expertise that I want to use on a particular mission in a particular country, it never stopped me. Nobody tried to urge me not to have a woman on the mission ever.

**HEATH:** Right. Okay. How about relations between the professional staff and the support staff? I mean in those days of course the support staff were mainly female. How did that relationship change between, before and after McNamara?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, I think it was two big classes of people, I mean you had the professionals and you had the support staff, and there were a lot of people at the support level who had pretty high education, master's degrees and whatnot, and they aspired to maybe get into the junior ranks of professionalism and didn't, and that was a tension. I know there were a lot of good females who were research assistants, administrative assistants, chief secretaries, who would like to do more and they didn't get in. There was a big gulf from going to that. That I think is better today, if I understand correctly because I've seen some of the people who have worked at the secretary level today working at professional levels at the Bank.

I think the other thing that was noteworthy about the '70s was that we broadened the composition of the staff. It had been largely engineers, financial analysts and economists before and you saw the beginning of social scientists. You had Michael Cernea come in. I recruited him from Romania. You saw then people with a nutrition background, with a public health background, and so they, and a lot of Peace Corps people came back from various countries and we used them because they had expertise in local community work. And so you broadened the staff in those days to include many more disciplines and many more subject matters than we ever had before.

**HEATH:** And of course, the other aspect was a broadening in terms of nationalities, you know, American preeminence. I have some numbers here, under George Woods apparently the percent

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of Americans went down from 55 to 40 percent, but then actually it rose under McNamara, rather from '68 to '73 from 40 percent to 45 percent, so they were still quite dominant in the organization. I was wondering if there were any tensions you perceived between different national groups, how that played out?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, I mean I didn't see that tension, because in my recruitment, I recruited worldwide. I was very happy that I didn't work for the U.N. when I recruited, because I was not bound by country quotas. To me, one of the worst things about the U.N. is that you had to deal with country quotas all the time, recruitment and promotion and it is devastating on the effectiveness of those institutions. As long as I could show that I had a rainbow division, I went out and recruited in all— that doesn't mean that I have a quota in my own mind as to who I wanted, but I went out and recruited people and at no point in time was that discouraged. In fact, it was encouraged, and I got positive feedback on my side of the management that I had recruited a lot of people who were non-Europeans and non-Americans.

**HEATH:** Would you say, joining the Bank, there's a process of homogenization in the sense that cultural differences possibly get steamrollered or worn down. I mean some people would say it's a very gray institution in that sense, the irony is you have all these people from all these different cultures, but somehow the diversity doesn't reflect in terms of the— it's not expressed. It doesn't find expression, there's maybe a tendency to play it down. I don't know.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, that's an interesting question and I don't know whether I can add to it. My own feeling is this, that compared to some of the other, let's say the Inter-American Development Bank, where each nation had their little caucus. I remember talking to a Mexican friend of mine in the Inter-American Development Bank, and he said every Friday, all the Mexicans at the Inter-American Bank come together, and we report back to the finance minister in Mexico City. I thought to myself, thanks god we don't have that in the Bank.

Because in that sense, we felt, we were proud of the, or at least I was, that I was an international

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civil servant, and the fact that I'm a Norwegian wasn't that important. I was working side by side with other people of excellence that I respected, and I enjoyed working with. I saw more and more, or at least coming in from developing countries and we could choose really good people from both Africa, Latin America and Asia and supplement that, compliment that, what we already had in the Bank.

At no point in time, did I see any opposition from British or Americans that this was the wrong approach. The funny thing about the British was that they were very particular about use of the English language. They wanted everybody to make sure they had good skills in English writing, which I think is a good thing, but that's where they were. The English in the Bank at that time felt that they could express themselves better than the Americans could in English.

**HEATH:** Even though of course they had to write in American's language rather than British language.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yes, yes, even though they had to do it. But I mean--

**HEATH:** Unlike the U.N. system.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Raymond Cope, who was the secretary of loan committee, he was a deputy to Burke Knapp, had these skills sessions and when we came into the loan committee, Leif, couldn't this be said much... he said, instead of using three pages, couldn't you say that in two paragraphs? Oh, you are absolutely right, yeah. So, I went back and condensed three pages down to two paragraphs because, and so in that sense, the British had that influence on us. But I think it was constructive.

**HEATH:** It's the tradition of the precis in schools, you had to learn to summarize things very concisely.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** That's right.

**HEATH:** How about mafias? I mean wasn't there an Indian mafia or a Pakistani mafia maybe that helped people get promoted? I mean anything like that that you perceived.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No. Now, I can't speak for the whole Bank, because maybe mine --

**HEATH:** No.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But I never felt that promotion, when I promoted people, that, there was a mafia or people coming to me and saying Leif, I think you should think about such-and-such. Quite frankly, sometimes it was the opposite. I remember a couple of times that McNamara's office, and I'm not even sure that he himself was involved in sending back down some CVs of some person that had come to the office and wanted to work at the Bank. I thought to myself, my god, if they had to go to the president's office to try to get at the Bank, they can't be much worth, so I just dumped in the trash can. I just went back, the case has been considered, that's all we reported back and there was never, nothing was brought back to us. When we didn't accept that from the president's office, we certainly weren't going to have that by mafia types in other parts of the world.

**HEATH:** Let's go to a specific incident when you were working with McNamara's assistant. You were at the Copenhagen annual meetings.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right.

**HEATH:** Tell me something about how that played out.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** We were told there would be enormous anti-Vietnam demonstrations in downtown Copenhagen, that demonstrators from all over Europe would gather and make a big

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mess of the meeting. It turned out to be, well, I don't know if this is worthwhile mentioning, but in the preparation to that meeting McNamara really needed some rest and one of my jobs was how do I get him from Washington to Copenhagen and how do I get into Copenhagen when he is rested. So, he said I can take 24 hours somewhere, if you recommend it, before we get to Copenhagen. I said Bergen Norway, that's my village. I can make sure that you are totally protected up there.

So I had Mr. and Ms. McNamara on fake names with SAS [Scandinavian Airlines]. I talked to the head of the SAS for North America and said this is the story. So his middle name was Strange, Robert Strange McNamara, so Mr. and Mrs. Strange were flying to Bergen. In Bergen, I had the owner of a travel agency pick us up with a car, a chauffeur driven car, which he himself, the owner took on. We drove up to the mountains in Geilo and in advance I talked to them and said I have somebody that really should be shielded, and I didn't say who, and can you just make sure that nobody is a -- we're coming in at 6:00 o'clock to the reception. Nobody is there except just the key for them, and then I want a suite where I want to have birch wood burning in the fireplace and it was ready by the time they come. Anyway, to make a long story short, all of it went through to the next day, and McNamara then invited my parents to come and have dinner with him, and we sat in the big dining room and nobody noticed Bob McNamara. Anyway, they were just average persons then.

So we came all the way down to Copenhagen and then so the only time we were approached by the big newspaper was at the, when departure from Oslo, at the lounge. We were all, the journalists outside want to meet with McNamara, and I went out and said he's not available, but you can talk to me. So that was the interview with me in the newspapers.

When we came down to the airport in Copenhagen we were taken to the safe side, we're not going through them, and there was secret service and we were taken in and it was done, and there was no incident on the way in. When he was going to go to the dinner the first night, in the Tivoli Restaurant, the local police felt that the Tivoli police knew exactly how to handle this. So

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I remember we came in the opposite end of the restaurant, and the Tivoli, not police, but the guard service in there, so theatrical uniforms, everybody who knew that they were walking up and down, and they were sort of like they provide information, where is the carousel and this kind of thing. So we walked with them in without any police and we were walked all the way through into the restaurant.

The demonstration took place, but they never interfered in our business. There were some hotel windows smashed in, in the Hotel Royal Room, where we were staying but that was incidental. There was not a major thing, it was not at the major gate, the major door, the main door, and so that they whole, the meetings turned out to be less disruptive than I certainly thought they would be.

**HEATH:** Now, in your note to me, you said that you were a pacifist and obviously you didn't support the Vietnam War. You say you were a vocal opponent. Did that create a tension, or not? I mean did it make you apprehensive when you started working with McNamara and how did that develop over time?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I didn't want the job. When I was out in Bangladesh, in those days it was East Pakistan, I had developed some skills inside the rural credit and microfinance was beginning to work in the north of Dhaka, in the Comilla area, north of Dhaka. I was involved in that and many missions through the agricultural division. I had also been in Pakistan as a member of the country economic mission and I'd looked at domestic finance institutions generally. So, I had both the national experience and agricultural credit experience.

I was in the middle of really interesting work and I suddenly got halfway through my mission of four weeks, five weeks, I got a cable from Reg Clarke in the Bank that said come back, come home immediately. I didn't know. I was mad because I thought my god, I didn't really want to leave. I was in some of the most interesting professional work I had ever done in my life, and the local people were very upset that I pulled out and they couldn't understand why.

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So when I came back, coming through London, I got another note from Reg Clarke saying please come and go straight to my office, don't go to your home when you come, and I said my god, what's happening, am I being fired. So, I did that. I came in from Dulles, took a taxi into the Bank and Reg Clarke was there late at night, 8:00 o'clock, 7:00 o'clock in the evening and said you will have a meeting with Robert McNamara tomorrow, he's interviewing you for being a personal assistant. I thought to myself, what? That's a job that-- I would never like to work on the 12th floor. It was never in my ambitions at all. I was a person who liked to see things happening in the field and that was where I got my professional satisfaction.

**HEATH:** So did somebody headhunt you? I mean you must have been--

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, no, the personnel department looked at young professionals who were non-American. There was a screening process out there with the personnel. I think there eventually were three candidates. I don't know who the other two were, but when I left, I know there were three candidates before they chose Anders Ljungh. In the morning, I came in and I thought to myself, this is a job that I don't really know much about, in either case I will be very uncomfortable working with, unless he knows exactly where I'm standing.

So he introduced me, he was very nice and said this is the job and he said tell me a little bit about yourself. I said well, before you go on, I think I'm not so sure I'm suitable for this job because I may be an embarrassment to you. What do you mean? I am a pacifist. I refused to serve in the Norwegian military, I'm an anti-Vietnam supporter and people know that I've been very upset about the idea of having people coming from the defense side into the peaceful, development work we are doing at the Bank.

He looked at me straight in the eyes and said Leif, I respect people with personal convictions. And I said well, anyway, I laid out my case and if that didn't bother him, at least it would never haunt me later on that I hadn't been honest with him about this. Then I began to sort of think

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wow, maybe, that would interest me.

He was very pleasant, he was very constructive, he talked about his vision about expanding the Bank and making it more of a development agency than it had been before, and that pleased me. He wanted the Bank's hiring the best quality people we can find anywhere in the world to do this kind of work. He had said as a manager, one of my cardinal rules is to always hire people who are better than myself, and that's something we should try to do at the Bank too.

So, I thought okay, if that's what you want to you, I will accept it, and then I accepted it. I had a wonderful time with him and gradually we became friends, I guess, because often he would call me up to his office when I was in other jobs at the Bank and say, what's your view on this, Leif. I don't think I necessarily prevailed in all cases, but he often asked me for his view when I was elsewhere in the Bank.

When I left the Bank, by that time he had also left the Bank, we saw each other at least once, twice a year for lunches or dinners, and when my wife died, ten years ago, he and his wife appeared in my local church for the funeral service of my wife. So, in that sense, we've had a continuing relationship after this, but not initially.

**HEATH:** Did you ever talk about Vietnam with him?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, I stayed clear of it. But I was aware that in meetings with the heads of states, and I participated in many of the heads of states meeting, about 30 of them around the world for the two years I was there, that Vietnam came up. The only time, and I was interviewed for a book about Vietnam on this point, and that mistakes were made, and you know, so then blah, blah, blah and then, the journalist who interviewed me said, did he say that he made the mistake? No, I can't be quoted on that, because that I didn't hear. I never engaged in Vietnam discussions with them.

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**HEATH:** Did you see that documentary, *The Fog of War*?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Oh, yes, I saw that, yeah.

**HEATH:** When I saw that, I couldn't help feeling there was a certain evasiveness about the whole thing on McNamara's part. I mean he clearly, you know, wasn't defending it, but at the same time, I don't know, we're somewhat short of a full frank confession of failure.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, I think the way that I see it, I read some of the Vietnam books and I read all of his books and whatnot, and what's been written about him. I'm still not a Vietnam expert and I have never been to Vietnam, so I can't speak with any authority, but he clearly was caught in the sense that he knew already in '65 that things were going in the wrong direction. The American public and particularly the military officers down the line would have been much more respectful of him if he at that point in time, '65, '66 had said things are not going well, we need to pull back. He didn't.

His argument was that I'm going to work with Lyndon Johnson from the inside and try to change him, so that he can change it, and so that he, there can be a smooth transition and not a confrontation. That was, in retrospect, perhaps his mistake, because he stayed with it too long, even though he knew, and there are lots of references that he already knew things were going wrong in '65. I think that his evasiveness to this day, for the rest of his life was that should he have spoken out much sooner on Vietnam, should he have -- and I think that Cyrus Vance, who was Secretary of State at one point in time gave up his job and everybody praised him for being in that position, of being principled. McNamara suffered from the fact that people felt that he should have been more principled with the American public.

[Interview Break]

**HEATH:** Right. We were talking about Vietnam, thinking about other crosscurrents of the

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times and the extent to which they had any impact on the life of staff in the Bank. I mean sometimes you think about the Bank being rather a bubble where people outside the Bank, they still talk about their work in the Bank. Is that a fair depiction of the Bank do you think? The people you knew, if they went to a dinner party, were they capable of talking about stuff outside Bank business, or was there a lot of shoptalk?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I think it's natural, if you sit around the table, and there are people with just World Bank experience. But I think that most of the dinner parties that I went to had a mixture. I mean I did not have social life just with the World Bank staff. When the World Bank staff were, some members around the table, I don't think they ever tried to dominate or sort of bring a bubble, an expression of what it is to live and work inside the Bank. I always felt they were originally good professionals who could participate in any discussion about development issues.

**HEATH:** How did you meet your non-Bank friends? In what sort of context?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Neighborhood mostly.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In the neighborhood I lived in. I lived at Hollin Hills, south of Alexandria, and there was sort of a young professional, liberal, if you will, establishment down there, about 400 families. We had our own everything from the Spanish club, French club, tennis club, everything out there. And we had, there was an open, it was very integrated from the beginning. We had people from different parts of the world living there, so it was through neighborhood connection.

**HEATH:** Right. Can you think of specific instances where the events outside the Bank, in America, let's say the riots of 1968 or other turmoil, the energy crisis, I mean did this influence

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people in their daily work in the Bank? Did they talk about it?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, I think, I mean I think the turmoil is in connection with Martin Luther King and the Peace March and Bobby Kennedy's assassination and later on, and also Martin Luther King. Those were really shocking things because we thought we were finished with the Vietnam thing, at least the worst part of it, and then this thing took a much uglier tone domestically. And we wondered what that would have to say about the American's leadership in the world when things were in such turmoil at home. Did we talk about it? Absolutely.

The energy crisis, likewise, I mean it affected interest rates and the price relationship between our exchange rate between Europe and the dollar and whatnot and sometimes negatively, very negatively. But I still feel that the Bank, in terms of continuing doing the work we did in the Bank, we continued to work and sometimes we, we may be carried on, because in many ways, the Bank was quite decentralized in those days. I mean McNamara never looked at the final reports. And the loan committee chairman, Burke Knapp or somebody else, would never really look at the reports. I mean it was up to the division chief and the department director to clear all that and make damned sure it was in good shape.

I remember after McNamara left and Clausen came in and what not, but I was sort of surprised, pleasantly surprised that we just carried on doing the work we had done before and whether it was a new president in, it didn't really make that big a difference on the how we conducted our operations with the client countries.

**HEATH:** I mean you said that the final report was very much in your hands, but one has this impression of McNamara as being very much on top of all these reports. I mean just to give you a trivial instance, I mean the project completion reports, he used to be concerned about the schedule, whether they were delivered on time and if there was a backlog. And I'm not aware of any other president who has had that level of intervention on the delivery of products.

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, because he, he was constantly being scrutinized for whether he, when he expanded the volume of the Bank, that he was more interested in the expansion than in the actual output. And so, he said no, no, I am very much interested in what we produce, and I don't want the Bank to slack up on that. And so, the completion report was an indicator to him that he was a good manager, that he was not just focusing on setting new loans, but he was making sure that he also supervised the completion of them, the project report.

And that nobody, no one down the line can say I'm too busy to do completion report because I have to spend and do more lending. He wouldn't accept that. He said, no, no, you have to do both. You expand then because you have better staff and you have new ways of doing things. But you also have to take care of making sure that the project produces a result and one way of doing that is to make sure that the completion reports are -- that to me was very, very good.

**HEATH:** Yes. And the tradition of self-evaluation that he started, I mean it's still with us today.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right.

**HEATH:** Do you have any thoughts about how effective that system has been?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I think it works, it worked better on the old system, but if you have a matrix system of management, it doesn't work that well.

**HEATH:** Sorry, what do you mean by the old system?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** That there was a line responsibility, up and down. For example, that if I had a staff member who had worked for, and I lent out my staff to other divisions, at the end, I was responsible for that person, even if he had worked for Bob Picciotto in Asia. I sent Bob a note saying how did he, tell me? He explained that he did A, B, and C in India, what's your assessment of that. But at the end, I will be responsible for then the overall evaluation of that

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person's report whether you work for me or part-time for other.

If you have a matrix where you work a little bit here, a little there, a little bit there and you really have no central focal point, which is what people tell me. Here, I have no personal experience, but I have learned today with people in the Bank is then that you don't have that, the evaluation loses some focus.

**HEATH:** Hmm.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And then you also go back to mentoring, which also you mentioned in your paper. Mentoring was a very important part of everything we did in the old days in the Bank, in my day. I benefited enormously from having superb mentors. They were like professors. They were as good as my professors in graduate school in terms of being able to talk to them. One of my mentors, Bob Sadove used to say, Leif, I'm very busy up to 5:30 but at 5:30 every night of the week, you can come in ask me one question before I go home, and I'll respond. So every day, I had, but don't come to me just to talk because I don't have time for that. So I wouldn't go every day, but maybe two or three times a week, in the beginning, I would go to Bob and say here is the problem, how do -- go look at the sector report in Thailand, we did that two years ago, you'll find the answer there. Okay, thank you, I did. I did.

**HEATH:** Right. When it came to going on mission with mentors, were there funds, the budget to do that?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, we didn't have the mentors on the missions.

**HEATH:** I see.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But the mission chiefs also had to have a lot of experience in the Bank. Today, there's a lot of mission chiefs that don't have much Bank experience and they, they need

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mentors themselves. I've met people in the field who were so empty about the Bank's institutional history that I was quite shocked.

**HEATH:** Right. Just to go back to the project completion, under the old system, you said there was line management and that, are you implying that somebody who started a project, who took it to the board necessarily would be responsible for writing the completion report even though they probably moved on to another region?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, that, I don't know.

**HEATH:** No?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, no, but the people that took that person's job would have to do that, so that the system worked.

**HEATH:** Yes, because often what happens is that a consultant gets hired to do the completion report and it's not taken with the, it's not really a self-evaluation exercise in that sense.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah.

**HEATH:** It's often parceled out to other people.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But I would say that we did less parceling out to consultants.

**HEATH:** Right, yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In those days.

**HEATH:** Yeah.



**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I can't ever recall asking a consultant to do that kind of work, a completion report, never.

**HEATH:** Right. Why do you think Bob McNamara wanted to set up the OED [Operations Evaluation Department]? What was the driving force?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Because he, for the same reason I just mentioned earlier, that he wanted to make sure that the clients also had the chance to come back in and comment on the results of our projects, and that we were, we were responsible bankers, development bankers, that we were not just interested in pushing volume, which he would -- a lot of people in the press would say all these interests and they're expanding volume and he said no, no, no, I want to have quality, I want to see that this is happening.

The evaluation department was a very powerful department because it was no longer up to the individual division chief to look at the completion report. Now we have somebody who looked at that result and could come back. I remember one of my senior agriculturalists, the OED keeps me honest, keeps me honest.

Because he had to go through two hurdles, he had to go through me, but he also after had to go through that. So what he wrote of the completion report couldn't just be a snow job. He had to do a professional job, he as a staff member, not a consultant.

**HEATH:** Right. But do you think the findings, I mean often operations staff are very skeptical about the value added of OED. I mean do you think that they really had an influence on the, for example, the design of new projects?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, I do think so. I think people--

**HEATH:** Can you think of a specific example or an OED report that had an impact?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, but I mean my colleague in the Agriculture Rural Development Bank, Don Pickering, did you ever come across his name?

**HEATH:** I've heard of the name, yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Don Pickering was assistant director of agriculture when I was his director for rural development with Monty Yudelman. The three of us worked the front office. Don had a, he read all these completion reports and indeed all the supervision reports. And he would come out with a short statement, I have looked into the completion report and here is an interesting observation I remember. It was something that could spread around the whole Bank, because people are busy. They can't read big reports, and they certainly wouldn't read about what was happening in other regions unless somebody pointed out that it was worthwhile reading. He felt that one of his jobs was really to point out some of the lessons learned from the completion report, and that should have a say on how you prepare the project. He was very much into that loop and encouraged that.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I think he was very effective. I would say all credit to Pickering for what he did.

**HEATH:** Right. Slight change of direction, environment, towards the end of your career. You worked, you were the, heading the environment division first under Hans Wyss and then under Sergei Lin (phonetic).

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Hans Wyss.

**HEATH:** Wyss, excuse me. That's outside our period, but I want to know about McNamara

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and the environment. I mean he, McNamara, was the guy who appointed the first advisor I believe. I can't remember his name now.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Jack (Weiss)? No, no, it was not, it was--

**HEATH:** I'll look it up, it must have been about, I think it was after the Stockholm Conferences in '72.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right, it was.

**HEATH:** What's your perception about McNamara? Was he really, was this really at issue, front and central for him, or?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, as we broaden the concept of development to include all these other things we had discussed, he was open to the idea that environments could be very important. And I remember Barbara Ward, does that ring a bell?

**HEATH:** Yes, of course.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** She used to come in his office quite often and Barbara Ward was very vocal on this issue here, and he respected her and said okay. Barbara Ward probably was the person who influenced more to appoint immediately an environmental advisor. The environmental advisor later had a little unit attached to it, but it was never very effective in the Bank. It wasn't because these people were not good people, but they were isolated, and they were isolated because they didn't have any Bank knowledge about how the Bank operates. And so they were constantly, when they came out with suggestion, it -- those who were sitting on the other side said wow, that's good in theory, but have they really thought about how to do that in practice. I mean it seemed to be an academic type institution, much more environmental principles without really linking them into the broader development picture.

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But I would say, it wasn't that the wrong people were appointed, because I think they had the ability to do that, but they were just isolated in an environmental unit that did not, unlike my rural development division, where I hired half the people in my division were people with previous Bank experience. I think they suffered from that, and McNamara then, I think he got less interested in environment when he saw how little these guys could influence the Bank. I think that's fair enough to say. So, I don't think he was a strong believer that, that was as a major thing.

But after he left, and when Conable came in and reorganized the Bank, and that's where we had the first environment division. Of course, the NGO community was very happy about this and a lot of good publicity for the Bank came about as a result. I think what we did with the rural development division, we hired people who really knew the Bank and we brought in other people. Again, I did the same thing, 50 percent of the rural development division are people outside the Bank, from inside the Bank. We mixed the two, we merged the two, and we had a lot of fun with that.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I would say that Kim Jaycox, who was vice president, he said, Leif, I want your division to check every single project before it goes to the loan committee and if, and if you are unhappy with it, I want to know before anybody else knows.

**HEATH:** Right. Another theme that McNamara is associated with is family planning. I mean I wonder whether he was sort of a Malthusian who was concerned about growing pressure on the natural resource base, and that was possibly a link to the environmental agenda. I don't know.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I think that in terms of Barbara Ward who pursued both those things.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yes, so there was that link. But even before that, there had been a lot of writings in the '60s about the about the population and he was very much feeling that you had to address it. You had the religious opposition to it. I remember what one of the things he did quite well I thought, when he went to give a speech on family planning, he called in one of the people he had met through the Kennedy family, namely Father Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame University. They had a talk, and as a result, Hesburgh invited him to give that talk on the campus of Notre Dame.

He was not out to pick a fight with the Catholic Church, but Hesburgh invited him in. He was quite a liberal Catholic and allowed him to come in and so in that way, he showed that he didn't really want to confront the religious beliefs of people, but he felt that there were things underlying, there were important principles involved here that one should think about if one is concerned with global development.

**HEATH:** Yeah.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But that there was a link between the two, yes, there was.

**HEATH:** He got a rather frosty reception when he went to Latin America I remember, when he talked about family planning issues, yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, but by and large, he got mostly praise.

**HEATH:** Right. Okay, yes. Totally different subject. Did you ever belong to the 5:30 Club?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I went there a few times, but I didn't really go, because I—

**HEATH:** Tell us something about what it meant, where did it come from?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, it came after the Copenhagen meeting, as you said. There were a lot of people who felt that inside the Bank, if their outside world is critical about what we are doing, that we are perhaps having too much of a capitalist approach, that some of the social issues need to be better addressed and we should have an open forum for that to be discussed inside the Bank. I think it was a healthy thing. I went to a few of the meetings and I felt it was for the good.

**HEATH:** I think McNamara addressed one of the meetings.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He did, yeah.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I can't recall which one though. I wasn't there when that happened.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But he was, that didn't bother him, that people had, I mean it didn't bother him that I was a pacifist, why should it bother him that people thought that capitalists should be under scrutiny.

**HEATH:** Yeah. I mean if you read about him, so many people, like various people in the oral histories have said that people feared him, people found him forbidding. You yourself have said that essentially, he was somebody who was rather shy.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right.

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**HEATH:** So, in the case of that 1974 photo opportunity, I mean he didn't, he preferred that you talk about rural development, he didn't feel comfortable addressing.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, he was basically a shy person.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I was asked to look into the issue early on when I was a personal assistant. He said, Leif, can you look into this, and I said, well, it will take a few days because that's a very complex issue, yeah, that's okay, take them, take some days and think about it. And so I did a lot of work, worked late at night, and blah, blah, blah and then I said to him, I didn't then, but two days later he said, or three days later, he said, by the way, where are you on this?

I said, I have pretty good, substantive conclusions but I haven't gotten the data, the underlying data I think to support it, and I know that's important to do. And he said, Leif, sit down, relax. Tell me about the substance, the data is not-- I want if you have looked into something, I am much more interested in hearing your view on the substance of what we're talking about so this thing about data thing, so me, he never scared me with that. He never created fear that Leif, you haven't done enough data to do this. Quite the contrary, he encouraged me to talk openly about whatever I was supposed to do for him.

**HEATH:** But there are stories from other people that, you know on missions, for example, he would require very precise data and he always wanted the rate of return to be an exact number rather than a range and so this led to a certain pressure on some people to actually fabricate, make up, you know, numbers just to--

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah. No, no, that probably is true. I didn't see it myself, but I had heard that there had been people who felt they'd been exposed to that. He was, he did feel that to

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just to say the rate of return is between 10 and 20 percent, I mean that didn't really appeal to him. He said we must at least have a professional judgment as to where it is. Not that it is the be it all, but at least it seems like somebody is not doing their homework and then want to guard themselves. They haven't really done the fieldwork and therefore they like to give a range rather than the specific points. It was more that. But I can see--

**HEATH:** That's statistically naïve, surely, I mean.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Probably, but keep in mind this is an important point, statistically naïve, he was a statistician by training all the way back from the Air Force days in World War II. And then when the best and the brightest—

**HEATH:** David Halberstam, yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** What he was used to in those days, working all the way up through that and forward, was that he had very good data and could produce exact results. I remember talking to a friend of mine that was an American colonel. He was a captain in the U.S. Army, and he was stationed two years in Vietnam, and he said, I cannot understand what happened, because I was in charge of a delta, one of the areas of the delta. I was called in by [William C.] Westmoreland into Saigon to be present when he briefed McNamara. When I saw up on the blackboard, the numbers for my area, that had nothing to do with the numbers that I had given Westmoreland. So, somebody had, that said, had massaged them.

**HEATH:** Yeah.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And so I think he had a naïve belief that the statistics down below were as good as they would be in the Ford Motor Company or in the assistance analysis he did at Harvard and whatnot.



**HEATH:** Yeah, there's a nice story about shortly after he joined the Bank, he phoned Jim Evans I think and said can you tell me how the caloric intake of Indian farmers has increased as a result of Bank assistance in the last five years. Jim Evans apparently sort of scratched his head and no I can't, I'm sorry, because just that data hadn't been collected.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right.

**HEATH:** You know.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And I think that was honestly done. I mean I think that some people might be scared and try to make up numbers, but Jim wouldn't do that and that's all to his credit. He was a very responsible man.

**HEATH:** Right. Going back to the more cultural side of things, these days people talk about the work-life balance in the Bank and you know, staff are often perceived to have difficulty in getting this right. How did that issue play out in your time? In particular, my wife has encouraged me to ask questions about how the wives of Bank staff coped with, you know, being affiliated to this organization, the impact it had on the family and so forth.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah, talking about my wife, my wife was very proud that I was part of the Bank, and she was an at home mother and took care of three little boys. I brought her into the Bank, and she felt that she met people and was exposed to people that she had never met before, even though her father was on the faculty of Harvard, so she came from an academic background. So, I think that the toughest things for the wives was that their husbands, including me probably, were not always honest about how much we really loved field work.

I remember at the point in time as a manager I was supposed to hold people's staff travel down to 130 days a year, and that was my job, making sure that it didn't go above that. There was this English agriculturalist who was really good and he was older, much older than me.

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**HEATH:** Do you remember his name?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Peter Navich (phonetic)

**HEATH:** Yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And Peter said, now I have to go out again to this mission. I said, but Peter you have already gone above your 120 days, yeah, but I've already talked to my wife about it and it's quite all right, he said. Then Saturday night two weeks later, I met Mrs. Navich and one of her complaints was to me was that her husband is traveling too much.

**HEATH:** Right. Yes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** As I took Peter, Peter you aren't being honest with me, but it was that excitement about wanting that, because some of the most interesting you did in the Bank was in the field, not what was happening back at the -- headquarters was not the most exciting time. Being in the field was exciting. We were out there four or five, six weeks. When I first started, I was told that if I spent more than one-third of my time in the capital city I was a failure. I had to be in the field two-thirds of the time, I had to be in the field. I could not just be some parachute person coming into the capital talking to the ministers and then moving out again, that was a big no-no. So, we were driven to field work and I think that the wives suffered from that because we—

**HEATH:** Because in those days, phone calls were extremely expensive.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Very, and you didn't really know where you were.

**HEATH:** Right.

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And you had faxes you could send, and they were costly.

**HEATH:** Telexes, surely, not faxes.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Telexes, you're right. Telexes, that's right, yes. And a telephone call would be just really horrendous.

**HEATH:** You probably needed to get special authorization to make a phone call to home, wouldn't you?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And once, if my wife tried to call from her end, she had to go first through London if I was in East Pakistan, Bangladesh. London and then Beirut and then Beirut there would be Karachi, and then Karachi, it would be Dhaka.

**HEATH:** Did you ever take your wife with you on mission?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yes I did, and it was a great success. I took her to Asia, I took her to Africa, I took her to Latin America, and she loved it. She said now, I understand what you are doing. It was very important to her that she could go on these trips.

**HEATH:** Was there ever any discussion about, I wonder how the divorce rate of Bank staff compares with the general population, I mean because of these pressures of people traveling all the time. Do you think there was a higher divorce rate maybe?

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I don't know the numbers, here, back to the McNamara thing, I haven't seen the statistics, but my guess is that there was more pressure on family life in the Bank than in many other professions, and as a result, it wouldn't surprise me if we had higher divorce rates, yes in the Bank than—

**HEATH:** Yeah. Of course, divorce is a highly cultural thing, too.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yes, it is. And it's also generational.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** In Norway, the people in this, who went through the '68 revolution tended to divorce more than the people who now who get married in 2016.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, I mean in the last ten years.

**HEATH:** Yes, let's finally move back to— towards the end of the McNamara period, you said where are we, the same department until, sorry, no you went to the Africa—

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Region.

**HEATH:** East Africa region, that's right. The reason I mention this is because you say in your memo that by that time, people were beginning to be aware that the agriculture projects in Africa weren't working. You had had the Berg report, for example, and it was the start of the shift towards structural adjustment. Interestingly, one of your first bosses was Stanley Please and I think I'm right in saying he subsequently was an exponent or advocate of structural adjustment, is that right?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right, he was.

**HEATH:** What is your, what is your feeling about that whole shift towards structural adjustment, particularly in agriculture?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, in agriculture, of course, and this is a very important point to me. The biggest failures we had in agriculture were in Africa. In Africa, you could not go on with a project approach because the policy environment was totally non-conducive to any work, particularly for small farmer operation, but agriculture generally. To this day it is a problem in the policies over in Africa. I'm going to Africa tomorrow and I'm still dealing with a minister of agriculture who is not sure they believe in small scale agriculture. I think what is important here is that we had to go beyond the projects and bring it back to the policy level.

At the policy level, then the question what you can have in agricultural policy related operation where you address the specific issues in agriculture. But there were so many issues that were wrong with exchange rates and the tax systems and this and the trade policies, that the policy dialog with a structural adjustment became saturated with stuff. I remember when I headed the environment division, I was asked to kind of contribute to the structure adjustment and some of the people who were going to operate said listen here, we are saturated with it, we just can't handle that anymore.

So I think it was a right thing, but the way we did it, we -- I don't think we were selective enough because you cannot pack into a policy dialog a huge number of recommendations. You had to take a few at a time, and you had to think about it strategically and sequentially. I think we did it wrong by packing too much into the structure, and they became non-starters because they didn't work.

**HEATH:** Right. Well, in fact, Ernie Stern, in one of his interviews, he said that structure

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adjustment works, but it really only works in countries where you have a good civil service, you have institutions and so forth, which begs the question well, those countries wouldn't need it anyway presumably, if they were working so well.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Right. No, I think it's this, I would think that there's a selectiveness of issues, because at the policy dialog level, you can work two or three issues at the same time, but you can't get the president or prime minister to focus on more than two or three when you come in. You can't come with a litany of things from gender imbalances to environment to agriculture, to infrastructure, to telecommunications. I mean we overloaded the circuit and that was a mistake. It was a mistake then and it's a mistake today if we do it today.

**HEATH:** Right. Very finally, there is something I forgot to ask you about earlier and that is the 1972 reorganization. I mean you could say that the change that took place then was reinforced by subsequent reorganizations in '87 and '96 and I didn't know how familiar you are with the 2014 reorganization but...

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Not really, a little bit, but not really.

**HEATH:** To some extent, that was an attempt to--

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Bring it back.

**HEATH:** -- redress the balance between the sector side of the Bank and the regions' side and to give the sectors a big more influence.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Yeah.

**HEATH:** But anyway, going back to '72, what was your perception for that? The motivation for that and how it played out.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** The most vivid thing that I remember from that reorganization, I was sort of a junior, I was a division chief at that time, yes, I was on Ghana and I was called in to have this little division chief view on the process. I think I was in one of the task forces, so I was involved in that too. But what I most vividly remember, is the conclusions that Warren Baum articulated to all of us on behalf of the McKinsey team that had done the work, I think it was McKinsey who did that work, is that the Bank should never expand the staff to large numbers because we should just go for the high quality people and we should really never expand numerically like the U.N. agencies do. There was sort of the worry that don't ever become like a U.N. agency. Today, we are much more like a U.N. agency than ever before, ten or 12,000 people, almost an unmanageable organization. And so I think that the reorganization at that time was trying to set some parameters that we broke, that we expanded much faster and we haphazardly in all directions without too much thinking.

But I think that moving from the project into the area that made a lot of sense to me, because I think you need a counterbalance to the hierarchy of the project department side which was so strong, because people are out working with India and Indonesia, they could do nothing if this monolith of people at that level said no, we don't— I mean there was a David and Goliath type of thing. So I think that redressing it was absolutely the right thing. I think that the Bank in my view, must always have an interchange between good, strong sector departments with the many departments and good, strong area departments, and that one shouldn't dominate the other.

**HEATH:** Right. Okay. You don't see any downsides from that reorganization?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I can't recall at the details of the reorganization. Remind me then what took place.

**HEATH:** Well, I was thinking in terms of quality control. I mean was there some, we talked about this a bit earlier, but do you think there was any negative impact on the quality of,

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technical quality of projects? I mean given that areas now had more authority to approve the projects and so forth, because they weren't necessarily in command of the technical substance were they?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No, they weren't. But I think that the old project people who had had a near monopoly power position before resented it, and many of them probably do that to this day. I don't think that's fair, because I think that an area department division chief director who sent a bad project through the line and pushed that through would be caught and it would be accountable.

I'm not aware of any situation where when I headed, I was responsible for all projects on Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia at that point, when this took place, and I can't remember ever that my position, well but of course, it was the beginning of the reorganization, so maybe from the full effect of the reorganization wasn't felt, so I have to be cautious about that. But I think a balance of the two is healthy, and I think that quality as such, quality of the report, and quality at the end, should be dependent on what happens at the end of the project, are we really producing effect on the ground that really is tangible and positive developmental blah, blah, blah. And I think that that tension between the two might be healthy between the two to make sure that we --

**HEATH:** Yes. Very finally, Leif, looking back on the McNamara years, I mean have you reevaluated your perception of that time with the benefit of hindsight and other things you see differently now than you saw then about that period?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Well, I think first of all, I think he was the most amazing and effective president of the Bank since [Eugene] Gene Black. Gene Black has a big star in my reading about the history of the Bank, and I think he is to be complimented for making it into a real development agency. I think that where he and we, were naïve, was that we thought that the obvious for pursuing growth with distribution could mean going on to doing it through small scale farmers and whether a rural development project or a pure agriculture project more like the

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Benor approach, TV (training and visit system), that it was so obvious that we were working in something that was in their own interests.

We were wrong, because most countries in Africa couldn't care less about agriculture. Sometimes, I just felt that the Bank was just sort of whiplashing itself. We haven't found the right project style, scope, the concept. Should it be single sector, should it be multi-sector, should it be integrated development. We slashed ourselves right, because we haven't found the mechanism. But the mechanism didn't really make a damn, because at the end, there was really no buy-in power by the leadership most, with some exceptions, but most of them, they didn't care.

That has lasted all the way up today. I work today with African agriculture in universities. I'm going out to a meeting tomorrow with them.

**HEATH:** Which country, sorry are you going to?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** All of them, I'm going to Cape Town tomorrow.

**HEATH:** I see.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But they come from all over Africa.

**HEATH:** I see.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** We rotate around, membership is 55 universities all over Africa. And to this day, there are ministers of agriculture who doesn't believe in nothing but large-scale agriculture, to this day. The Africa discussion was very much influential about that we sort of we had the integrated rural development approach, then the, therefore we should have discontinued that earlier, I think that's poppycock. We could have discontinued that earlier, we

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should, but hell, we did Benor approach. There's no trace left of the Benor anywhere in the world that I know of.

**HEATH:** You know, it's amazing, if you look in Wikipedia and try and find Daniel Benor, he's nowhere.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He's nowhere.

**HEATH:** He's still alive, he's still getting a pension from the Bank, but he's off the radar screen totally.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** He was incredibly good in terms of handling top level Bank managers. McNamara, Stern, and vice presidents, he cultivated them, like he had a skill there which was amazing. He was ruthless on the ground, and he did not produce anything that is viable today. I remember, there was one, once in the case of integrated, I mean in Tanzania, everyone said, one of the agriculturalists from the then agricultural division for East Africa before I joined them said, well we had problems with all these integrated area, or the area development projects and that was what -- and they all had negative rates of return on the completion report. I said wait a minute, the commodity project they did, it's single sector, let's stack those up, how did they -- They had even worse negative rates. So, don't come use that argument. It was not the project, it was that the fact that you had no buy-in and particularly in Tanzania. They wanted the donors to show that you can do something and that they were engaged in other things at the top that had nothing to do with agriculture and (inaudible) to agriculture.

**HEATH:** What was the essence of the problem with the Benor approach, the T&V [training and visit] approach in your view?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** The answer is it was very costly and most countries don't have money for that type of thing. The other thing is that it was very top down. He wanted to have messages

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focused from the research team into the extension. Ostensibly, he said that there should be feedback thing back from the extension back to the researcher, but there wasn't that.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** It wasn't that. I mean in theory, but all the time have you been out there looking at how the package has been delivered. When things didn't work out, he would always blame Bank staff. He created more scare among young Bank staff than any other senior official in my -- I thought that he was using the influence and power he had at the top level in management to create fear for anybody who opposed him at different staff levels. It was not good, not healthy. To this day, I do not understand how was it that Kim Jaycox and Ernie Stern and these guys really believed this because there were enough warning signs that we can see that -- I organized, in fact Kevin [Cleaver] was involved in that, you may ask Kevin about that when you see him. We had a workshop in Eldoret on the extension in Africa before he got involved. I remember Benor brought in a lot of people from India.

**HEATH:** Which period was this?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Oh my god, when was that? It was '81 maybe or something like that, '81, '82, something like that, and maybe '83, early '80s. We organized then the Eldoret workshop and Kevin was very much involved in that. We brought people from the USAID, from the French cotton extension approach, from anybody who wanted to, to put all these extension systems up for discussion over a three-day conference in Eldoret, Kenya.

I remember that Benor surprised the Indians by saying, when the Africans said, well, wait a minute, we don't have a double harvesting situation here, we have just single harvesting because part of the year, we have dry periods, and we can't do much.

Then we had to be adjustable to think about this and this Indian sitting next to me said, my god, I

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never in my life ever heard Benor say that you should be adjustable to local field conditions. But he started off and he got a lot of, initially, now if you have a lot of push for that, you get a lot of attention to the extension services, you can get short term effect for that, sure.

**HEATH:** Right.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But to sustain--

**HEATH:** The French were always resistant, weren't they?

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** What?

**HEATH:** Francophone Africa, they didn't really go for--

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No.

**HEATH:** -- it in the same way as anglophone.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** No.

**HEATH:** Yeah.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** But I think the other problem in Kenya was, and I remember sitting with the head of the extension services once, it was about the time when Kevin was there, but he was not at that meeting. We were sitting up in the, in the office of the director of extension services, and I think it was research and extension in the ministry of agriculture. There was a big loud talk down in the corridor, down in the courtyard right below the meeting, and so the door opened and whispered, so they said oh, wait a minute, I have to deal with a difficult situation. So they went out and they were gone for quite a long time, and I thought, my god, is this end of the meeting,

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but then he came back and apologized profusely. He said, I am caught in a situation here because we have made the promise to all the agricultural technical schools in the country that whoever passes the exam can get a job with extension service, but I don't have enough jobs, and I am required now, so I had to put them to work somewhere. But he had an open license for anybody who passed your ag exam, that they would be guaranteed a job in the extension service. You can see how that whole system, first of all increasing costs became unmanageable.

**HEATH:** Right. Sure.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** And I think that either Benor didn't understand that, or he refused to look at that. I thought we had a very good report coming out that Kevin was partly author of, but there was another guy that actually wrote most of it. Stephen Eccles ran the similar thing for West Africa, and we had a good comparison.

At the end of the day, when newer people were at the division chief level and the new staff came in, and when he saw that things weren't really developing and he would browbeat, he would be out in the field and browbeat these people to make sure that they reported favorably on the report. That's the only time that I've ever seen in my whole Bank history of young staff coming to me saying we are beating browbeaten by a senior person to tell our managers that things are going better than they really are. And for that, I think he destroyed himself. When I go to Africa today, there is not a mention of the Benor system, it's gone.

**HEATH:** Fascinating. Leif, we've spoken for two hours, and it's been a marvelous exchange. I've learned a hell of a lot from you and I'm really so grateful. And I think it's a great start for this exciting new oral history project.

**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** Thank you very much.

**HEATH:** Thank you so much.

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**CHRISTOFFERSEN:** I enjoyed it. Thank you.

**HEATH:** It was great. All the best.

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