

Oral History Interview
with
THOMAS D. CABOT

Director, Office of International Security Affairs, Department of State, 1951; consultant, Special Mission to Egypt, 1953.

Boston, Massachusetts
June 6, 1975
by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
July, 1979

NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for the Harry S. Truman Library. A draft of this transcript was edited by the interviewee but only minor emendations were made; therefore, the reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

RESTRICTIONS

This oral history transcript may be read, quoted from, cited, and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission of the Harry S. Truman Library.

Oral History Interview
with
THOMAS D. CABOT

Boston, Massachusetts
June 6, 1975
by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library

MCKINZIE: How did you meet President Truman?

CABOT: The first time came about as follows: I had for a brief period been president of the United Fruit Company, and had argued over policies with the man who had been running the company for 20 years, Samuel Zemurray. He and I disagreed mostly over a question that I call, "gunboat diplomacy." He had a group of consultants in Washington who might be called "influence peddlers" to get help from our Government in problems the company was having

[2]
with governments in Central America. I decided we were pulling the company apart, and resigned.

About that time I met Donald Carpenter, chairman of the Munitions Board in Washington, and told him about my troubles with Zemurray. He said, "Why don't you go to work in Washington?"

The Government seemed like a step up and I said, "Well, I might be interested in doing that." He gave my name to Louis Johnson, the Secretary of Defense. Johnson knew that there was a vacancy as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and a vacancy as Assistant Secretary for Research and Development in the Pentagon, and he first tried to persuade me that the latter was what I should do. I felt the former was something that would interest me more. He said, "Well, come down to Washington; I'd like for you to meet the President."

This I did. He took me into the Oval Room with Steve Early, the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

[3]

Johnson had to leave almost immediately and left Early and myself with the President. It was a difficult time, because I didn't know what to talk about. Of course, I tried to tell him what I thought was needed by the Atomic Energy Commission, and why I thought that I might be qualified. Soon, I ran out of things to talk about and got up to make my excuses, but the President said, "No, don't leave, they'll bring in another customer on me."

Then he said to Early, "Steve, stay around for lunch, will you?"

I sat down again. He was fiddling with a block of plexiglas in which was imbedded a beautiful ear of corn. I said to him, "That's an interesting item, Mr. President." He had glanced at it and said, "Well, how do they get that ear of corn inside the glass?"

I started to tell him about how they put it in when the stuff is a liquid, how it is polymerized and hardened, and soon I felt ridiculous: what was I telling the President of the United States about that for? He grinned, and changed the subject. After some small talk, I said, "Well, Mr. President, you want to have lunch with Mr. Early," and I got up and left. That was my first experience with Mr. Truman.

Later when I was in the Department of State I saw him perhaps a dozen times. Usually I went in with someone else, such as Chuck [Charles M.] Spofford, our Ambassador to NATO and sort of my opposite number in Europe. Once, I went in with Dean Acheson, once with Bob [Robert C.] Lovett, and various others in our Government. None of those talks were particularly significant. I don't remember what they were all about, but I do remember one other instance which I think is indicative of the kind of a man he was.

I think he was a real leader, despite the

[5]

fact that he considered himself a haberdasher who had been lucky in politics. He was very modest, but he was a leader in the sense that he allowed others to make decisions when they were competent, or when their decision was one that affected what they had control of. He didn't grab decisions away from his department heads, Cabinet members and so forth; he didn't grab

decisions away from me. He, of course, made the big decisions, and I think he made some great and courageous decisions during his term of office.

One day, I went in alone to see him about moving the political headquarters of NATO from London to Paris, which was really in my bailiwick. I was director of International Security Affairs and spoke for the State Department on NATO affairs, and had charge of the program of arming our allies throughout the world.

I had my views, condensed down to about a

[6]

page, of why we should move the headquarters from London to Paris and brought it with me. I told him that that's what I'd come to see him about, and handed him this memo. He looked at it quickly and he said, "Have you talked to Dean Acheson about it?"

I said, "Yes, it has his support."

"Well, have you talked to General [George C.] Marshall about it?"

"Yes, I haven't talked directly with him, but I have talked to his subordinates and I understand it has the approval of the Pentagon."

He said! "Okay," and handed it back to me. I thought this was a dismissal to leave, and I started to get up. Then I noticed that he had been reading a book. This was at 11 o'clock in the morning of a busy day. He had been reading a book on the history of the Panhandle of Texas, which is an area that I know quite well because Pampa was the operating headquarters

[7]

of the Cabot Corporation. I mentioned the book to him. He said, "Have you read it?"

I said, "No, I know Frank Dobie, the author. He is a professor of history at the University of Texas, and I know a little about the history of the Panhandle because I visited the museum down in the Palo Duro Canyon."

He said, "Oh, you've been down there, have you? Isn't that a great museum?" He'd been there and he knew far more than I did about what there was in the museum. We talked, I suppose, for 15 to 20 minutes about the history of the Panhandle of Texas, the museum, the Coronado expedition. This was a busy morning and I would have thought the President of the United States would have been far too busy for small talk with me.

I mention this episode because to me this was the strength of the man; he really had the sense of history and of his position in history.

[8]

He concerned himself with those decisions which he couldn't leave to others, and that really affected the history of our country. I think he made great and wise decisions.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Cabot, could you talk something about your own initial involvement in the Department of State and how you came to take the position as director of the Office of International Security Affairs?

CABOT: This I have put in writing; you can find it in an article in *Atlantic Monthly* which I wrote shortly after I left office. I don't know exactly why I was invited, but my assumption is so well in accord with my knowledge of the people and the facts of the case that I think this undoubtedly is true. The assumption I have is this: Jim [James E.] Webb, Under Secretary of State at that time, had some sense of the political situation in Washington, although he

[9]

had very little knowledge of foreign affairs. He had never been to Europe, knew almost nothing about its history or culture. Jim Webb did have the ear of the President. He had been director of the Budget and I'm sure that the President had consulted him on some political things. I assume that the President and Jim Webb had discussed the fact that Acheson's popularity in the Congress, particularly the House of Representatives was not very high. Acheson was going to have some trouble in getting a bill passed that needed 12 billion dollars, for the arming of our Allies, in fiscal year 1952. Webb suggested to the President that he ought to put a Republican businessman in charge of it. The President thought this was a good idea and asked Webb to seek such a man. Webb consulted Don [Donald K.] David, the Dean of the Harvard Business School. I was not a graduate of the Harvard Business School, but Don

[10]

David knew me quite well, and he mentioned my name. I expect he put my name first of several candidates he mentioned to Webb and Webb thought this was a good idea.

He called me and asked me if I would come to Washington to see Acheson. We arranged a mutually convenient date; it's not easy for me to decline to go see the Secretary of State. The arrangement was that I was to meet Webb in his office. When I came into his office Webb had there, obviously by prearrangement, Averell Harriman, Bob Lovett and Bill Foster. I knew and admired them all; they were obviously people who had come out of business and had done very well in Government. Webb started by saying that I should be another like them. They tried to tell me what a great thing it was to work for Government, and how it was just like working for business except you added three zeros on top of every financial problem that you considered. They all urged me to stay

[11]

in Washington and talked of the needs of that crucial period. I had certain things that I had to go home for, but I did agree that I would come to Washington, to get briefed, in December. I had been engaged to go cruising with some of my family and I came back right after New Years and settled into the job. That's how I happened to get there, and I'm glad I did.

I felt terribly naive when I arrived. I found it very puzzling. I found practically everything that they handed me was "secret" or "top secret," and I was so naive that I thought that meant important. I found very soon it didn't always, particularly in those days.

I had, as my executive assistant, a man who had been in the State Department for several years, Bill [William J.] Sheppard. He straightened me out very fast, took me around to meet all of those members of the Cabinet

[12]

that I would have dealings with; General Marshall, Dean Acheson, Secretary [John W.] Snyder of the Treasury, and some of the lower in rank, such as Bill Martin then the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, and later head of the Federal Reserve Board. Martin was a great fellow, by the way. I enjoyed him very much indeed.

Also I met General Omar Bradley, who was then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'll tell you an amusing thing about that. When I got in to see him, he thought I was some new security officer to try to keep the secrets inside of the Pentagon as Director of International Security Affairs. I talked for a while and then I discovered he was treating me as having nothing to do with anything abroad and was obviously not impressed with what I was doing. When I told him what my job was, he started right over again, being very cordial to me indeed.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Cabot, was there bipartisanship in

[13]

foreign policy in that period? Dean Acheson always contended that it was, with some notable exceptions, a period in which bipartisan foreign policy worked.

CABOT: Within the State Department there was real bipartisanship in the sense that there were some prominent Republicans working in the State Department as a member of the team. They had access to all of the information that they needed, though there undoubtedly were political things that they didn't have access to. I'm not claiming, of course, that Webb couldn't talk to Dean Acheson about things that concerned only the Democratic Party. During most of the time I was there Foster Dulles was working on the Japanese treaty. My deputy, Charlie Coolidge, was a Republican and much more a party man than I. There had been quite a number of others. The predecessor in my job for a brief period was Jim Bruce. I think he was

[14]

a Republican. I'm sure there are many others. Paul Nitze, for instance, was the head of Policy planning. He's a Republican and well-known. George Perkins, who had charge of the European area was a Republican. Yes, I would say there was distinctly bipartisanship there. There was real bitter scrapping with the [Joseph R.] McCarthy group, [Patrick A.] McCarran, and Bill [William F.] Knowland in the Senate. They thought they knew how to run foreign policy better than the State Department did, and the State Department was fighting with them. Those were partisan fights.

MCKINZIE: The work you were doing, coordinating the military assistance with economic assistance, was a very large problem for the United States after the Korean war broke out. There have been some criticisms, and one criticism is roughly as follows: "The Marshall plan was about to fall apart, and the military assistance program

[15]

which came in 1950-51 was a policy necessity to save the European economy." As one who was intimately involved, did you think at the time that military assistance was going to be necessary to save the faltering economies of Europe?

CABOT: It was necessary, not for the faltering economies of Europe, but for the rebuilding of the armies which we felt was necessary in view of the Communist threat. Probably we misjudged the solidity of the Communist group, but we certainly were entitled to believe that the Communists, the Soviet Union specifically, might attack Berlin. We were scared about Berlin, and we didn't, of course, want to start a nuclear war. Berlin couldn't have been defended with ground troops, if the Soviets had wanted to move in there. Rearming Europe seemed necessary. I don't think there was any argument, that I ever heard, that we shouldn't rearm Europe. Everybody that we talked with in Washington

[16]

seemed to agree with that. There possibly were some people in the Congress that would have been against it; you never have exact unanimity in that group. There was great difference of opinion, both on Capitol Hill and in the State Department, as to the relationship between economic aid and military aid. We were giving weapons and the ECA was still giving some economic aid. The ECA Act did not permit them to give any aid that had any direct military impact. My job, as I conceived it, was to try to persuade our Allies to appropriate more money for rebuilding their armies. We were giving them hardware and they were giving us the bodies to defend Europe and the whole periphery of the Communist world.

MCKINZIE: Some of the critics have said that the United States was more concerned about the "Communist threat" than were a number of the countries of Europe, and that they did not see

[17]

the necessity of rebuilding militarily with the same degree of urgency as people in the United States saw it.

CABOT: I never got that feeling. I'm sure there were people in Europe that felt that way, but my dealings were more with our Ambassadors who dealt with these countries, or with a few of the highest officials of our strongest Allies who came to America. Usually I sat in on their talks with the President. I've sat in on all of the [Rene] Pleven-Truman discussions, and most of the discussions of other European leaders who came to Washington. These were the top European leaders of countries that were clearly our Allies. There was no discussion that we were pushing them too far. In fact, they came begging for more military and economic help. Pleven very decidedly did, and my memory of that discussion is, of course, not complete, but I do remember those questions which were handed to me to

[18]

answer. The particular one was how much military equipment aid we would give to the French in Indo-China. That was in very early 1951. The question asked me was whether we would give them a shopping list of things. I said, "Those things that cannot be produced in France, we

feel that you are entitled to; but those things that can be produced in France, we don't feel that we should give you. That is simply supporting your budget in France."

I think the ECA attitude was to give them things that they had to buy in the United States, other than military. It was never giving them money that would support their budget so much as giving help with their dollar problem, the problem of hard currency. Those currencies were very weak during the 1950-51 period, as compared to the dollar.

MCKINZIE: I'm wondering if your office got into some of the ticklish questions of that program,

[19]

which involved the production of some items in Europe, which might ultimately hurt the capacity of the United States to produce those items -- offshore procurement -- such items as airplane engines in Italy, for example, or tanks in France.

CABOT: Neither of those were discussed, as I remember. I do remember very strongly that the Dutch felt they could build minesweepers cheaper than we, and in fact were quoting about two-thirds of the American price for new minesweepers. My office and my interdepartmental committee considered this. The Pentagon, under pressure from Navy procurement people, presumably, didn't want to buy the minesweepers in Holland; not so much because they weren't good minesweepers, but because they wanted to keep the American shipyards busy. The State Department and the other members of this interdepartmental committee were all urging the Pentagon to buy

[20]

these minesweepers in Holland. That's the one case I remember, and it certainly would have been our usual policy to try to get the Europeans to produce anything they could produce that they needed for their own military posture.

MCKINZIE: Are Government interdepartmental committees efficient ways to arrive at policy?

CABOT: Of course, things have to be done interdepartmentally whenever a matter transcends a single department. A basic part of my job was to try to coordinate the arms effort, directed largely by the Pentagon, with the ECA aid effort, and to try to get larger appropriations in Europe for their armies. When Eisenhower first went to Europe he wanted something like a hundred divisions on the ground to defend the place. Later, a paper said 93 divisions were needed. We never got anything near that; I think the maximum was something under 30 divisions. By that time I'd left Washington and the policy

[21]

was changed; we decided that we just couldn't defend Europe on the ground without using tactical nuclear weapons. I never personally believed that you could use tactical nuclear weapons without getting into strategic nuclear weapons; there is no clear dividing line there.

MCKINZIE: You have referred, in other places, to the fact that you sat in on a lot of these 9 or 9:30 morning meetings that Dean Acheson had as Secretary.

CABOT: Yes, five days a week or maybe six we had a 9:30 staff meeting in Dean Acheson's office. It lasted about a half an hour, maybe forty minutes, and we would review things around the world. Each of the people who sat in would put in his bit about what happened in his department, just the equivocal things that would be of interest to the rest of the group.

Our International Security Committee was, of course, interdepartmental like the National

[22]

Security Council, but at a lower level. It covered pretty much the same areas of Government as the National Security Council.

MCKINZIE: Dean Acheson had a reputation of having been a man, in his own words, who did not suffer fools gladly. Did this manner of his, which could be sarcastic and tough, inhibit free discussion among the people who came to those morning meetings?

CABOT: Most of the discussions in those meetings was just facts of what had happened. There was some discussion of policy. I don't think it quite fair to Acheson to say that he didn't suffer fools gladly. I don't consider myself a fool, but I was terribly naive, and he was very kind to me. He knew that I didn't know what was going on in Washington or how to behave in many circumstances. He was always giving me a good bunch of advice as to what to do, and I

[23]

came to admire the man tremendously. He was very articulate; he always had a good sense of humor. The snobishness of which he's often been charged, to my mind, was very superficial. It pertained mostly to the fact that he dressed so carefully, was careful in his language and was not quite the "hail fellow, well met" type that Midwestern Congressmen typify.

MCKINZIE: You were asked to go to Egypt on a development mission in 1953. I wonder if you would record your feelings about the whole American aid program? One idea was that what many countries needed was a massive injection of capital, and another idea was that you had to teach people to use a long handled hoe and to build roads and to develop service infrastructures - at least in the Third World. On top of that was the question of whether or not the aid should come from private industrial

[24]

investments, or be governmental. Did you have strong feelings on those questions in that period?

CABOT: That is difficult for me to recall. My feelings about Point IV type of foreign aid developed later. The Point IV program started when I was almost ready to leave the State Department originally. My trip to Egypt was at a lower level, not at a policymaking level with respect to whether or not we should help with developing countries. It was about how to industrialize Egypt, or what to do to help Egypt.

I think we tried much too hard to make countries like ourselves, particularly our political institutions. There were many other ways that you can organize the world and I do remember kind of knocking the ears down of some of the fools that I didn't suffer gladly. They

[25]

said that we could use our economic aid (I'm talking now of really ECA Marshall plan type of aid) to force political reforms in countries. I said this would be counterproductive and isn't what we are attempting to do at all. We are attempting to use this to build a better security in the world. The Mutual Security program was not a program of trying to force an American type of democracy on the rest of the world. I was pretty strong on that, and maybe that has to do somewhat with the fact that I finally lost my clearance in the State Department. I went to Egypt because I was asked by Jonathan Bingham if I would lead a group of A. D. Little, Co. engineers and economists to introduce them to the Egyptian scene. I accepted and went. While there we had to use office space which was behind the barrier not open to Egyptians in the Embassy, and it was decided to have us all cleared there. My

[26]

previous clearances had covered everything. I got into the most secret kind of things, including CIA type of things. I never thought that there was any problem for me, but I did know the regulation that when you have a new job you have to go through clearance. I came back from my trip to Egypt convinced that we should help with the Aswan Dam and went in to see Foster Dulles about this, who was then Secretary of State. I couldn't get in to see him; the secretary wouldn't let me by. I was rather shocked because I had known Foster Dulles quite well and I thought, of course, I had something to say. I went downstairs and Jack Bingham said to me, "Well, Tom, don't you know that you've lost your clearance?"

I said, "What?"

He said, "Yes, you've lost your clearance."

I said, "For what reason?"

He said, "Well, we are unable to tell."

[27]

It's all locked up in [Robert Walter] Scott McLeod's desk." I was shocked, obviously. I first thought that perhaps I'd been too much of a blabbermouth somewhere. In political things a lot of stuff that's secret one day is front page the next day and obviously you can't help but discuss these things. I couldn't think of what it could possibly be about, and they suggested to me that I ask for a field check before I really started to make a big fuss publicly.

I asked for a field check and some days later a fellow (who I couldn't very well respect from the type of man he was, he was not a very high-level man I would say) came to my office in Boston. He locked the doors, took out a machine, swore me to tell the truth, and then he started asking me questions. They started out with my relationship to my father; whether I loved him, whether I agreed with him and

[28]

a lot of perfectly foolish things. Then he read me something which I didn't recognize at all. It turned out it was a letter (I think I didn't really know until later) that my father had signed, but so also had Charles Francis Adams; one of the Bingham family, that owns the *Louisville Courier Journal*; and various other prominent Americans. It said in essence that we shouldn't deny a commission in our armed services to people who had formerly been Communists, provided that they were frank about it and willing to swear to the Constitution. He asked me whether or not I agreed with the letter and I said, "What was the date of it?"

He said, "1943."

I said, "Well, we were Allies of the Russians at that time. I think that I wouldn't have denied a commission to a person who had formerly been a Communist, provided he was now willing to swear to the Constitution of the United

[29]

States."

Then he read to me a letter which I had had a scrap with my father about; not about whether it was true, but whether it was appropriate to give it to the *Boston Herald*. He'd sent it to the *Boston Herald* and refused to see my point of view, which was that it was giving aid to our opponents in the cold war. He said basically in the letter that we should not call the Russians "Communists." We should call them "Stalinists," because after all Jesus Christ was a Communist, and so were the Pilgrims who had settled in Plymouth. When the man read me this thing I said, "Look, my father, having written that letter, was then past 90. Like most people past 90 he didn't consider the superficiality of what he was writing; he was only considering the truth of it. I don't deny the truth, but if that's the kind of question you're going to ask me, forget it, will you?"

[30]

I don't want to say anything more." He got up and left and I was mad, and I sat plenty mad for maybe an hour. Then I called in Jim Killian, [Dr. James R. Killian of MIT], because knowing enough about Washington I knew that if I lost my clearance in the State Department I was likely to lose it in Defense and AEC and CIA, all of which had contracts with MIT. I was not only a member of that corporation but a member of the executive committee. Killian by then was technical adviser to the Eisenhower administration; anyway he was well-known to Eisenhower. In about four hours I got a telephone call from the State Department saying that my clearance had been restored. I called Jim again and asked what he had done, and he said, "Well, I called the White House."

This is indicative of a really dreadful situation in Washington in the beginning of the Eisenhower administration. Scott McLeod, who

[31]

was an admirer of Joe McCarthy, tried to get a lot of people out of the State Department who had no easy defense. If I hadn't had access to Jim Killian I know what would have happened; it didn't matter to me, really. I was, I think, a very good loyal American wanting to help the administration, whether it was Democratic or Republican. To be considered treasonable was a shock to me.

MCKINZIE: Before the McCarthy era, when you were working in International Security Affairs, did you think that some people were overselling the Communist menace?

CABOT: No, I did not; people in the administration did not. I thought Joe McCarthy did, but around the table at the Acheson staff meetings, Acheson and everybody else had no use for the McCarthy and McCarran group. They were bitter at some of the things that McCarran had got passed into law about immigration and that kind of thing.

[32]

MCKINZIE: Mr. Cabot, is it a good idea for prominent businessmen to take time out from their careers to serve the Government, or is Government better served through career officers?

CABOT: I'm a great admirer of career officers. There have been, of course, some very poor businessmen who for political reasons have been sent on missions as Ambassadors and one thing or another. On the other hand there have been some awfully good ones; some of the very best of our Ambassadors have been business men. I think you've got to consider what the job is. I went to Egypt on a job where a businessman was ideal, because what they were attempting to do was to improve the economic viability of Egypt. They wanted to industrialize it. I came quickly to the conclusion that if you doubled the industry of Egypt, which was about all you could possibly expect, you still

[33]

wouldn't have done much for that country, because it was about 90 percent agricultural and less than 10 percent industrial. Therefore, you've got to do something for agriculture, and that's how I got interested in the Aswan Dam. I'll talk for a moment about that.

[General Mohamed] Neguib was the front man for [Gama1 Abdel] Nasser, although we knew that Nasser was the man who had led the revolution against [Fouad] Farouk. I talked with Neguib quite a lot. He was a very articulate person, not only a major general; had a law degree and talked perfect English. Nasser also talked English with a strong accent, but he talked it perfectly well. Neguib and I had many long discussions about what was good for Egypt. He wanted our help militarily, and we couldn't do that, because he wanted a stronger army so as to push the English out of the Suez Canal zone. The English had about 80 thousand men stationed

[34]

on the shores of the Suez Canal and he didn't like it. Furthermore, he was fighting with the English over the Sudan condominium and he wanted to be able to push them around there. We weren't going to help them militarily. He also wanted a steel mill and I tried to persuade him that it was a disservice to Egypt to have a steel mill. He could buy steel for about 40 Egyptian pounds per metric ton in Germany, Luxembourg, or even France. It would cost him twice that to produce

steel in Egypt. Although he had very good iron ore up near Aswan, he had to bring it down several hundred miles to lower Egypt, or else he had to produce his steel up there where he didn't have the proper kind of labor. Also, it was quite hot up near Aswan and steel is difficult to make in a very hot country because you have these very hot furnaces you have to deal with. He also had no coal at all and he'd have to get his coal from the Union of South Africa

[35]

which was a very, very long haul. I tried to dissuade him against the steel mill.

The third thing he wanted was help in the Aswan Dam and I came back and tried to persuade people in Washington. Having lost my clearance I couldn't get in to see Dulles, but I did write a long report which got sent around to some levels of the State Department. I found that Hank [Henry A.] Byroade, who had charge of the Middle East desk which included Egypt, agreed with me completely. Jack Bingham agreed with me. He had charge, at the time, of the Point IV program. I would say that a good many of the people on Capitol Hill agreed with me, but the people on Capitol Hill were either pro-Israel or anti-Israel and so it was very hard to discuss anything that would help Egypt without getting into that question.

Having been unable to talk to many people at the State Department I talked to

[36]

Gene Black. I tried to persuade him that the World Bank (he was then head of the World Bank) should get behind the Aswan Dam. I talked to quite a number of people about it, but I just didn't get anywhere without the support of the State Department. When I couldn't get support, I wrote an article which you can find in *Christian Science Monitor*, and talked to anybody who'd listen about the importance of getting behind the Aswan Dam. We were then estimating that it would take only 100 million dollars of hard currency to get the dam built. I think in the end it only took about 200 million. The dam has been a disappointment; my study of the dam was not as complete as it should have been. Of course, I had to rely mostly on Egyptian engineers; I talked to quite a lot of them. They tended to belittle the problem that you wouldn't have the silt on the land, and therefore, get the land renewed. I think they also tended to belittle

[37]

the difficulty of building canals to extend the irrigated area. They felt they could extend it more than they actually had been able to extend it.

MCKINZIE: At the time did people talk about the fact that the Egyptian population was growing about as fast as could be supported by the expansion of agricultural land resulting from the dam?

CABOT: I talked a lot about it; I was terribly alarmed at the problem. I had been interested in the problem of population growth, and I'm proud of the fact that I tried, while in the Truman administration, to get something in one of our official papers about the population problem. I never succeeded in getting it in; everybody was afraid of it. They thought it was a religious problem.

MCKINZIE: This was when you were in International Security Affairs?

[38]

CABOT: Yes. I was writing papers on what we were going to try to do about the economic aid to these countries. Even then I was concerned that we were putting money in which was going to be diluted because of the increase in population. When I was in the State Department the Point IV was only just an idea; it hadn't been implemented. By the time of the Eisenhower administration it was a big growing program, and I tried to use all the strength of the program to do something about the population problem. Egypt is a perfect example. Egypt's population was growing at 2-1/2 or 3 percent a year when I was there in '53. It was obvious that they were going to run out of land. There wasn't any way that they could support the population in another 30 or 40 years. Actually, they have done better than I expected in supporting them. The population then I think was about 18 million, and I think it's something like 35 million now. It's almost

[39]

doubled since 1953.

The thing I'm proud of is that I went three times, I think, to Washington to try to talk to people in the White House about the population problem. I talked mostly with Clarence Randall and various others like Bobby [Robert] Cutler, who was then Secretary of the National Security Council.

Clarence Randall said, "Well, you're never going to get the President to do anything about it, it's too politically sensitive. You can lose the votes of all the Catholics," and so on. Then he [Eisenhower] appointed Bill [William H.] Draper as chairman of a commission to study the Point IV program. Webb was on that, and various other people that I knew. I called Draper and wanted to talk to him about it. He said he would be glad to talk to me, but he wasn't quite sure of what his dates were.

I went down to Washington and tried again

[40]

to get in to see him and he was busy. I found that his chief of staff in this commission was Linc [Lincoln] Gordon, whom I knew very well. He'd been one of the ablest fellows on my committee in Washington, and so I talked to him about it. He suggested that I talk to various other members of the staff and was strongly in favor of having something in that paper that they were to write about how we couldn't keep up with the population. I went and talked to various members of the staff. Every member of the commission before I got in to see Draper seemed to more or less agree with me, and Webb very strongly agreed with me. I finally got in to see Draper and he said, "I know what you want to talk to me about; you want to talk with me about population. Everybody has been here to talk with me about population."

I said, "Yes, I've tried to talk;" I finally found out he was "in the church." He already

[41]

thought a lot about population, and I think he's done more than any other man living or dead to help us understand the problems of the population crisis. I am a great admirer of that fellow and what he did.

Parenthetically, we Cabots had been strong supporters of that from our foundation. Our foundation put up a lot of money to get the Supreme Court to a decision on abortion.

MCKINZIE: If I may return to a previous point. Can businessmen come into Government laterally, without coming up through it; and grasp on to those problems, work with the career officers and come to beneficial results?

CABOT: By "businessman," I take it you mean a man who has been very high in his company and therefore has been forced to make decisions. I think the problem in Government is to get decisions. Bureaucrats tend to not make

[42]

decisions except within the regulations that set up their office. They can't make independent decisions that are important. I'm not just thinking about policies, but decisions that haven't been discussed at a higher level; they have to do it always within a framework. A businessman doesn't make his decisions within a framework. He tries to think about what is good for the business. I'm not trying to claim that bureaucrats are not fully dedicated to the welfare of their country, but they just don't feel that it's their position to make big decisions. I think there is some advantage, in many jobs, in bringing a businessman in because of his decisiveness.

MCKINZIE: Did the Defense Department have the ability to make foreign policy, in the sense that you can get a lever on people by whether you give them economic or military aid, and can determine their political situation by such devices?

[43]

CABOT: I think that would depend a great deal on who was Secretary of Defense and who was Secretary of State. When I was in Washington working in the State Department, George Marshall was the Secretary of Defense. George Marshall had previously been Secretary of State, and he certainly realized the foreign policy implications of anything that he did over in the Pentagon. I would very much doubt whether Charlie ("Engine Charlie" we always called him) Wilson thought much about foreign policy. He had been running General Motors, which was a different kind of an outfit, when he came there. That's my guess and I have no evidence really, except that Marshall really understood the full implications of what we were doing. Marshall was really a wonderful guy, a wonderful person. I won't call him a guy, because very few people ever even called him by his first name. I can tell you that.

[44]

MCKINZIE: What about relationships with General Eisenhower when he was NATO commander?

CABOT: He did have quite a sensitivity to political implication. I can tell you an interesting thing. He sent a letter to me, which was sent over by military channels, saying that I was pushing

the Belgians much too hard to increase their military budget and that I'd cause the fall of the Belgian Government if I pushed that hard. I'm sure he got the idea from Bob Murphy, whom he had been visiting with in Belgium.

MCKINZIE: In that sense General Eisenhower was concerned about political situations and was asking the State Department to take a military man's advice on foreign policy.

CABOT: Yes. Both Truman and Acheson used to look down on the military as soldiers and try to keep them within their bailiwick. That's all

[45]

in a little book about Truman and it's true of Acheson; he always referred to them as "the soldiers." I think that he did have tremendous admiration for Marshall, and I don't think he ever referred to him as just "a soldier."

MCKINZIE: You had close relations with Robert Lovett, another man who came from the business world into Government. I've been told that he had far more influence on policy than his rank within the system might indicate.

CABOT: Yes. He was tremendously admired by everybody I talked to in Washington, and all of his counterparts in the State Department when I was there. He was in the Pentagon then, but he had been in the State Department briefly. He was really very much admired in the State Department.

MCKINZIE: Was he on this committee that you chaired?

CABOT: No, he was not. The Pentagon had a whole

[46]

series of different people, and they would bring in people from time to time, who were experts on particular things that we were discussing in our committee. Frank Nash, most of the time, was the fellow that represented them on my committee, but there were various generals. General Scott was one who came in, and so on.

MCKINZIE: To what extent, as chairman of this committee, as director of the Office of International Security Affairs, or as a Republican, did you have dealings with Congressmen?

CABOT: I never went there as a Republican. Of course I think most of them knew I was a Republican. I did see Congressmen quite a lot, mostly members of the Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Foreign Affairs Committees.

MCKINZIE: May I quote Dean Acheson and ask you to comment on it? Dean Acheson one time said,

[47]

"The House Foreign Affairs Committee doesn't amount to a damn. It never has, and it never will. The important committees of Congress are the Senate Foreign Relations and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. If you can deal with those people you are off to the races." Did you have that sense of structure within the Congress as to where power lay and how to get things done?

CABOT: I'm sure he knew better than I, but I did not have that feeling that they didn't amount to much. I had, I think, more friends on the Armed Services Committee than I did on the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate. Clifford Saltonstall was a member of the Armed Services Committee. I've forgotten who else was on it, but there happened to be several people I could talk to any time I felt like it. The fellow from Texas, Tom Connally,

[48]

never liked me. I'm perfectly sure that he didn't. He always treated me like the doormat every time I saw him.

[49]

INDEX

Acheson, Dean, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 21-23, 31, 44-45, 46-47

Adams, Charles F., 28

A.D. Little Company, mission to Egypt, 25.

Aswan Dam, Egypt, 26, 35-37

Atlantic Monthly, 8

Atomic Energy Commission, 2, 3

Belgium, NATO military budget, 44

Berlin, Germany, Soviet threat to, 15

Bingham, Jonathan, 25, 26, 35

Bi-partisanship, U.S. foreign policy, 12-14

Black, Eugene, 36

Boston Herald, 29

Bradley, Omar, 12

Bruce, James, 13-14

Byroade, Henry A., 35

Cabot, Thomas D., background, 1-2

Carpenter, Donald, 2

Congressional committees, State Department liaison with, 46-47

Connally, Tom, 47-48

Coolidge, Charles, 13

Cutler, Robert, 39

David, Donald K., 9-10

Dobie, Frank, 7

Draper, William H., 39-41

Dulles, John F., 13, 26

Earley, Stephen, 2-3, 4

Economic Cooperation Administration, 16, 18, 20, 25

Egypt:

 population problem in, 37-39

 U.S. Aid Mission to, 23-26, 32-37

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 20, 39, 44

Foreign aid, U.S. military and economic relationships, 14-18

Foreign policy, U.S., influence of Defense Department on, 42-45

Foreign Service, U.S. businessmen as non-career appointees in, 32, 41-42

Foster, William C., 10

France, U.S. aid to, 17-18

Gordon, Lincoln, 40

Great Britain and Egypt, friction with over Suez Canal and the Sudan, 33-34

Harriman, Averell, 10

Harvard Business School, 9

[50]

Indochina, U.S. aid to, 18

Johnson, Louis A., 2-3

Killian, James R., 30, 31

Knowland, William F., 14

Lovett, Robert A., 4, 10, 45

McCarran, Patrick A., 14, 31

McCarthy, Joseph R., 14, 31

McLeod, Scott, 27, 31

Marshall, George C., 6, 12, 43, 45

Marshall Plan, 14, 25

Martin, William McChesney, 12

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 30

Murphy, Robert D., 44

Mutual Security program, 25

Naguib, Mohammed, 33-35

Nash, Frank, 46

Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 33

National Security Council, 22

Netherlands, minesweepers, production of, 19-20

Nitze, Paul, 14

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 4, 5

Office of International Security Affairs, U.S. State Department, 5, 8, 12, 21-22, 46

Paloduro Canyon Museum, Texas, 7

Perkins, George, 14

Pleven, Rene, 17

Point IV program, 24, 38, 39

Population crisis, world, 39-41

Randall, Clarence, 39

Saltonstall, Levrett, 47

Sheppard, William J., 11

Snyder, John W., 12

Soviet Union, threat to Western Europe, 15

Spofford, Charles M., 4

State Department, U.S.:

 Bi-partisanship foreign policy, 12-14

 Congressional committees, liaison with, 46-47

Suez Canal, 33-34

Truman, Harry S., evaluation of ability, personality and philosophy, 3-9, 44-45

[51]

United Fruit Company, 1, 2

University of Texas, 7

Webb, James E., 8-10, 39, 40

Western Europe:

 military production in, for defense, 18-20

 rearmament of, post World War II, 14-18

Wilson, Charles E., 43

World Bank, 36

Zemurray, Samuel, 1, 2