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Scandals of Harding, Truman Administrations Compared—

Parallels Of Corruption Cited In 'Government By Crony'

By JAMES DANIEL
Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, Jan. 4.—President Truman has said he thinks the public will forget the scandals of his administration before the 1952 election.

The Republicans have been trying to live down the scandals of the Harding administration for 28 years—and haven't succeeded completely even yet.

As Presidents, Mr. Harding and Mr. Truman had certain things in common, a delight in helping their friends, a refusal to believe their friends could do anything wrong, a preference for "government by crony."

Below are highlights of the scandals of the Harding Administration and of the Truman Administration thus far:

Then

IF ever a man looked like a President, it was Warren G. Harding.

His appearance was distinguished. His manner was dignified. He radiated kindness. The people in Marion, O., where he edited a paper, told endless stories of his tactfulness.

At the Republican convention, nobody burned with the idea he would make a great President. But then nobody had anything against him, either. He was nominated after more positive candidates had killed each other off.

His "front porch" campaign won him the election.

When he took office, it was with almost universal good will. Congress for a while voted on him. The Senate confirmed President Harding's nominees for Interior Secretary, Sen. Albert B. Fall of New Mexico, without the formality of a hearing.

True, the "Ohio gang" followed Mr. Harding to Washington. There were some disquieting rumors that government favors could be bought in the "little green house on K street," but it was a long time before any of these broke into print.

IN 1923, President Harding died. The grass was just greening on his grave when a Wyoming oilman wrote to his Senator asking why Secretary Fall had secretly negotiated a contract for the exploitation of the government's Teapot Dome oil tract in Wyoming.

A Senate committee was formed to get an answer. Secretary Fall replied that he had negotiated the Teapot Dome lease secretly because that way he could get the best terms for the government. Moreover, he was also negotiating a contract for the Elk Hills tract in California.

He implied secrecy was necessary for the national defense—the oil lands were naval reserves and Washington in 1922 had been alarmed about the prospect of a Pacific war with Japan. Also, he said, private oil wells on adjoining properties were draining away the government's oil.

A government geologist said the drainage danger was trivial. Then, by chance, the Senate committee learned that Secretary Fall had just paid up 10 years' back taxes on his New Mexico ranch. He also had spent \$175,000 enlarging and improving the property.

FALL wrote a letter saying it was ridiculous to think this wealth had come to him in connection with granting the oil leases. He had borrowed \$100,000, he said, from Edward B. McLean, rich Washington playboy, his friend and husband.

But Mr. McLean said he'd given Fall \$100,000 in checks and Fall had returned them uncashed.

Then Edward L. Doheny Sr., who got the Elk Hills lease, came forward and said he'd lent Fall \$100,000 on a promissory note. He said they were old prosectors together; to him \$100,000 was only what \$25 or \$50 would be to an ordinary man.

The Senate investigation of Teapot Dome was the personal triumph of Sen. Thomas J. Walsh (R. Mont.). Sen. Walsh was one of the greatest investigators in the history of the country. Only his tenacity brought out the sordid story.

THE IMPACT of Doheny's admission on the nation was enormous.

The government charged Fall and Doheny with conspiracy to defraud the government. A similar charge was filed against Fall and Harry F. Sinclair who received the Teapot Dome lease.

The government lost both suits, but Sinclair served a jail sentence for contempt of court—he had hired detectives to shadow the jury. He also served a contempt term for refusing to answer Senate questions; no payment by him to Fall was proved except \$10,000 "expenses" for a European trip Fall took on Sinclair oil business.

In the late '20s Fall was convicted of taking a bribe and given a year in jail and fined \$100,000.

And there were other Harding scandals.

Thomas W. Miller, who had been Alani Property Custodian, was convicted of having received \$50,000 in connection with the \$6 million American Metals Co. The owners said they were a Swiss corporation not a German one. They admitted spending \$431,000 to get their property back.

HARRY M. DAUGHERTY, President Harding's attorney general and the man closest to him, was indicted in New York on a charge of conspiracy. He had approved restoration of the property. A jury deliberated 66 hours and then acquitted him, although he had refused to explain what happened to \$50,000 of the slush fund which went into a "political account" in his brother's Ohio bank.

The account was in the name of Jess Smith, Daugherty's Man Friday, who had a private office in the Justice Department and shared Daugherty's apartment. Smith was the most adroit of the fixers and wirepullers in the Harding administration; he killed himself in Daugherty's apartment while Harding was still President.

Another shocking suicide occurred in President Harding's term. Charles F. Cramer, legal counsel to the Veterans Bureau, sent his wife out of town and then fired a bullet through his head. After Mr. Harding died, Charles R. Forbes, head of the Veterans Bureau, was convicted of fraud. Bribe had been passed in connection with the granting of hospital construction contracts.

President Harding appointed many able men in government posts. But he also tolerated weak and unscrupulous ones because they had been his friends. He had tried "government by crony."

Years later Herbert Hoover called him a man "betrayed by his friends."

Now

WHEN the Presidency fell on the shoulders of Harry S. Truman, people immediately recalled the excellent investigation record of the Truman Committee.

As Senator, Mr. Truman had headed the committee which foiled war profiteers and spread the fear of God, or at least of Congress, among government buyers who might be tempted to dishonesty.

And in the first phase of his Presidency, he was so humble. Visitors came away and related that his parting words to them were "pray for me."

But within a month after he assumed the office he gave wholesale pardons to Pendergast minors who had been jailed for vote fraud.

In his first term, tenderness toward the Reds was a much more serious charge than corruption. Here again, Mr. Truman was lucky. Nobody could suspect him of Red tendencies, even when he defended the Alger Hiss case he had inherited from the previous administration.

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New Tribe Skipper Speaking—

Desautels Pledges Hustling Team

(Another Story, Page 20)

By BILL EGGERT

Gene Desautels, educated with 13 big league years as a player and four minor seasons as manager, predicted only two possibilities today for the 1952 Indianapolis Indians.

Signed today to a one-year contract as the Indians' 1952 manager, the 42-year-old catcher, said:

ONE—Indianapolis will have a speedy club.

TWO—Victory Field fans will not fall asleep because of dull playing.

Desautels would predict nothing more until he sees his playing material when spring training opens Mar. 9 at Indianapolis, Fla.

Chatterbox on Field

A chatterbox on the field, Desautels was never a rage as a big league hitter. His best average was a .291 for the Boston Red Sox in 1938, but he falls in line with the respected baseball theory that catchers make the best managers.

Next to speed and the usual player-talents, he leans heavily on team spirit.

It was spirit that brought a last place 1950 Little Rock team to first place in the Southern Association last season. With the same pitching staff left over from 1950 and only two replacements in the infield and a new catcher, Desautels directed the Travelers to the pennant.

He's the aggressive-type leader; just what Tribe President Donie Bush wanted for the 1952 Tribe.

Desautels, who will take on the responsibility as a third-base coach and confine his catching



NEW TRIBE SKIPPER—Both Tribe General Manager Chuck French (left) and new pilot Gene Desautels seemed pleased over Gens' inking a one-year pact with the Indians.

only to batting practice, hopes to have a 1952 Indianapolis team Jan. 25 when it is planned to have that "everybody, who likes baseball, will come out to see." He likes a colorful ball club.

He's familiar with some of the 1952 players, having seen them play in the Eastern League when he managed Williamsport. And he played with Tribe Outfielder Dom Dallessandro when both were with the Red Sox in 1937.

Desautels was all set to return to Little Rock as manager next season until he got the Indians offer.

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