**Graft and Oil: How Teapot Dome Became the Greatest Political Scandal of Its Time**

Teapot Dome is in Wyoming, named for nearby Teapot Rock and the site of an oil field. President Woodrow Wilson designated the oil site as Naval Oil Reserve Number 3 (the other two reserves were in California.) These reserves were created to make sure there was enough oil in time of war.

President Warren Harding appointed Albert Fall as Secretary of the Interior in 1921. As a lawyer, Fall had represented big mining and lumber companies and invested in mining himself. As a senator, he was not interested in conservation and the conservation movement viewed him as hostile to their ideas. Fall was determined to make national lands more easily available to private business. Fall persuaded the Secretary of the Navy and President Harding to transfer the naval oil reserves to his department – the Department of the Interior. Secretly, he leased the Teapot Dome oil rights to Mammoth Oil Company and his friend Harry F. Sinclair and to Pan-American Oil Company and his friend Edward Doheny. When news of this became public in 1922, it became a public scandal.

Fall argued that his tactics were reasonable, that they were helpful to the Navy and that the private companies paid money, or royalties. This money was used to build oil facilities at naval bases around the nation. The money would also be used to build an oil pipeline from Wyoming to Kansas that could be used by many oil companies. Secrecy was necessary, Fall claimed, because the storage facilities could be targets in war.

When the Senate investigated the scandal, Fall resigned from office. The investigation revealed that Fall had been given $100,000 as a “loan” by the oil companies.

Harding had appointed many of his friends, such as Fall, to high offices in the government where many took bribes, embezzled government money and committed fraud. Harding’s sudden death in 1923 caused Coolidge to announce that he would appoint two special prosecutors to take over the investigation into Teapot Dome.

Eventually, Fall was found guilty of accepting a bribe. He became the first Cabinet member convicted of a crime while in office, was fined and sentenced to a year in prison.

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| Name of Event |  |
| Setting |  |
| Characters (as many as you think are important) |  |
| What was the problem? |  |
| Sequence of Events (as many as you think tell the story) |  |
| Predict: 1. Why do you think Fall did what he did?  2. This caused the public to distrust government leaders – why? | 1.  2. |
| Resolution: Pretend you are a Congressman – propose a law to keep such an event from occurring again | My proposed law would be… |

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