

# The Teapot Dome Scandal

## DAILY ACTIVITY

**Directions:** Read the information and answer the questions.

Early in the Harding administration, Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall convinced the Secretary of the Navy, Edwin Denby, to transfer control of government-owned naval oil reserves at Elk Hill, California, and Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to the Department of the Interior. Secretary Fall promptly leased Elk Hill to the Pan-American Petroleum and Transport Company and Teapot Dome to the Mammoth Oil Company. The leases were made without competitive bidding from other companies. Edwin L. Doheny was the head of Pan-American, and Harry F. Sinclair led the Mammoth Oil combine. In January 1923, Fall resigned from the cabinet in order to join Sinclair's oil company.

A congressional investigation later proved that the Sinclair group had given Secretary Fall over \$300,000. Sinclair had also given Fall a herd of cattle for a ranch the Secretary was building in New Mexico. Furthermore, the investigation established the fact that Doheny had given Fall an unsecured, interest-free loan of \$100,000 to finish the ranch. The money had been delivered to Secretary Fall in a satchel transported by "bagman" E. L. Doheny, Jr., Doheny's son.

This series of events was known as the Teapot Dome scandal. It was the most famous scandal in the Harding administration and probably a factor that contributed to the President's premature death.

Albert Fall spent nearly six years testifying before congressional committees while trying to hold off various federal and local prosecutors. Finally, in 1929, he was convicted on charges of accepting a bribe from Doheny and was sentenced to a year in state prison, making him the first cabinet member to be sent to prison. After serving ten months he was released, a broken man, and spent the last years of his life in obscurity.

Navy Secretary Denby was forced to resign in disgrace, the victim of Fall's manipulations. Sinclair went to jail for contempt of court and jury tampering.

The elder Doheny was acquitted of giving the same bribe that had sent Fall to prison.

2. Explain the role played by each of the following in the Teapot Dome scandal:

Albert B. Fall

\_\_\_\_\_

Edwin Denby

\_\_\_\_\_

E. L. Doheny, Sr.

\_\_\_\_\_

E. L. Doheny, Jr.

\_\_\_\_\_

Harry F. Sinclair

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Where is Elk Hill and to whom was it leased?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Listing Consequences

4. Explain what happened to each of the following after the Teapot Dome scandal was discovered.

Fall

\_\_\_\_\_

Denby

\_\_\_\_\_

E. L. Doheny, Sr.

\_\_\_\_\_

Sinclair

\_\_\_\_\_

### Drawing Inferences

5. What might have been some of Secretary Fall's motives for entering into the Teapot Dome transactions?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What might he have felt when he was in jail?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Summarizing Main Ideas

1. What events are referred to as the Teapot Dome scandal?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_