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## **The Teapot Dome Scandal -Part I**

**Lead: One of America's greatest political scandals had at its heart the character of Warren Gamaliel Harding.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In 1920 the people of the United States voted for a return to normalcy. After a decade of political innovation and war the nation selected as its President an Ohio newspaperman turned politician, Senator Warren Harding. An affable and popular**

**man, Harding rode the public's good feeling into office. Within a short time the burdens of the Presidency and personal disappointments had brought him to the brink of death. A year after that political scandal had so clouded his reputation and that of many of his associates that his administration is almost universally associated in the common memory with corruption.**

**Many of Harding's appointments were excellent. Charles Evans Hughes at State, Herbert Hoover at Commerce, and Andrew Mellon as Secretary of the Treasury. No evidence linked Harding personally with corruption but several of his associates were charged with impropriety and one cabinet officer was tried, convicted, and served time for taking bribes. At the heart of the administration's problems was the personality of Warren Harding. He had**

**never held high executive office. He had built a career by taking moderate positions on policy and offending as few people as possible. Harding formed strong personal attachments and unless shown the most damning evidence was deeply reluctant to break with his friends.**

**His worst appointments were Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall, Attorney General Harry M. Dougherty, and Director of Veteran's Affairs, Charles Forbes. Forbes was an excellent example of Harding's failure. He met the future President in Hawaii when then Senator Harding was on an inspection tour and charmed him during a poker game. Forbes was soon selling government medical supplies to contractors at a deep discount for a cut. When the evidence became overwhelming, Harding finally confronted Forbes, physically shook him "like a dog would a rat," and obscenely**

**demanded his resignation. Forbes took the Presidential suggestion and left the country. Harding died on a tour of the West in the summer of 1923, perhaps as much as anything else, broken by the faithlessness of his friends. Next time: Teapot Dome.**

**At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

### Resources

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**McCartney, Laton. *The Teapot Dome Scandal: How Big Oil Bought the Harding White House and Tried to Steal the Country*. New York, NY: Random House, 2008.**

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