



World Bank Group Archives Exhibit Series

Dedication of the Eugene R. Black
Auditorium

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These exhibits, authored by World Bank archivists, highlight key events, personalities, and publications in the history of the World Bank. They also bring attention to some of the more fascinating archival records contained in the Archives' holdings.

To view current exhibits, visit the [Exhibits](#) page on the Archives' website.



Dedication of the Eugene R. Black Auditorium

On December 9, 1963 the auditorium in the newly-constructed C Building was dedicated to Eugene R. Black in his presence.

The dedication address was given by the Honorable Douglas Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. Below are some excerpts from that address:

"It was a little over a year ago that Eugene Black addressed the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and announced that he was attending his last such meeting as an 'active participant.' And it was in response to that unhappy news that the late Per Jacobsson [Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund], in saluting his achievements assured him 'that he will always be welcomed and honored whenever we assemble in the future.'



Mr. Eugene R. Black, President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, (World Bank), Washington 25, D.C.

"This auditorium that we dedicate today is a tangible symbol of that assurance—a permanent and public recognition that the name and accomplishments of Eugene Black will be remembered and honored for as long as the Bank itself is alive in the affairs or memories of men.

For it is impossible to think of the World Bank—what it has been, is, and will become—without being aware that, more than any other man, it was Eugene Black who gave it shape and direction during its critical, formative years.



Former World Bank President Black addresses the audience at the dedication of the Eugene R. Black Auditorium in the "C" Building, December 9, 1963

"Eugene Black's career with the World Bank began in 1947 when he was selected as the American representative on the Executive Board. The Bank had opened for business only the year before, and the problems that it faced were enormous. By the end of 1947, the Bank had invested almost all of its available



resources in postwar reconstruction loans to countries in Western Europe. The Bank needed funds. It had to open up avenues of credit to the world's investment markets, particularly the market in this country. That task fell primarily upon the capable shoulders of Eugene Black.

"His success was phenomenal. Largely as a result of his efforts and skill, the Bank very quickly became accepted in the capital markets of the world as a sound and viable institution. Mr. Black's brilliant role in that achievement led to his selection, in 1949, as President of the Bank—a position he held for some fourteen years.

"It was quite apparent, when Eugene Black assumed the presidency, that the task of erecting a new Europe upon the ashes of the old would require resources on a far grander scale than those available to the World Bank. The Marshall Plan took on that enormous burden while the World Bank began to turn its eyes and its efforts toward those lands and peoples just then struggling to enter the age of industrial technology and achievement. As events have since proved, the Bank could have made no more fortunate choice for all mankind—nor could its efforts have been guided more wisely or more effectively than by Eugene Black.



for the creation of a new mechanism designed to help meet the overwhelming



Mr. and Mrs. Black (left), with Mr. And Mrs. George Woods (right), greet guests at the dedication of the Eugene R. Black Auditorium, December 9, 1963

"The Bank's two affiliates—the International Finance Corporation and the International Development Association—are particularly impressive testaments to his vision and persuasive intelligence. For no one played a more decisive role in the creation of those two institutions than did Eugene Black. He saw—and he worked unceasingly to help others to see—that the needs of the less-developed countries were much too large, and their available resources far too small, to be served by international loans on conventional terms. In speeches, in talks with leaders here and abroad, he argued eloquently and cogently

Demolition of C Building begins, 1990



needs of these countries. His efforts bore fruit in the IDA.

"The great unfinished business that the Bank began under the direction of Eugene Black ...will continue in the same spirit of idealism tempered with practicability that characterize Eugene Black as well as the Bank he guided and nurtured in its most crucial years...."



Eugene Black Auditorium as seen from the stage, 1975

Following the dedication ceremony there was a reception for some 400 invited guests.

The Eugene R. Black Auditorium was located on the 11th floor of the C Building. Its room designation was C 1114.

As designed, the Eugene R. Black Auditorium had a seating capacity of approximately 400, with concealed sliding doors permitting division of the space



Eugene Black Auditorium as seen from the rear

into smaller rooms. The seats were removable and the carpeted floor had a twenty by thirty foot section which could be taken up for dancing. The walls were covered with grass cloth. There was a stage sixteen feet deep and thirty-two feet wide with velour curtains and backdrops. Projection machines for both 16mm and 35 mm were installed. The auditorium was the scene of many meetings, concerts, blood donation drives, and other gatherings of staff. The original Eugene R. Black Auditorium was demolished along with the rest of the C Building to make way for the New Main Complex.

On Monday, however, the auditorium in the H building was officially renamed in honor of Eugene R. Black. President Wolfensohn inaugurated the auditorium at a function attended by Black's daughter-in-law, Susanne Black, and his granddaughter Julie Taylor, and a number of Bank staff.