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BENSON

BENSON, EZRA TAFT (OH-516) 55 pgs.

OPEN

Secretary of Agriculture, 1953-61

DESCRIPTION: The National Council of Farmers Cooperatives (period covering 1939-44; including structure of organization; purpose; Benson's responsibilities as executive secretary); agricultural background (including farm experience; service as county agricultural agent and state agricultural economist and marketing specialist; education; national exposure through agricultural groups, church responsibilities, and education contacts); Benson's concerns for free enterprise system, farm problems, government control of agriculture; Benson's appointment as Secretary of Agriculture; Eisenhower's contributions to development of US farm policy (including Eisenhower's background and interest; the Cabinet; the Agriculture Advisory Committee; Eisenhower's and Benson's philosophy toward government intervention in agricultural affairs); details of veto of an election-year farm bill; Benson's problems with Eisenhower's 1952 endorsement of 90% of parity; the National Dairy Association meeting at Pennsylvania State College (including Milton Eisenhower; butter storage and price supports; solutions to dairy problems); Milton Eisenhower and the Secretary of Agriculture job; USDA's relationship with the State Department (including implementation of PL-480 program; agriculture attaches; budgets; screening personnel); USDA's relationship with the Treasury Department (including support of Benson by George Humphrey and Arthur Summerfield); Cabinet support for agricultural concerns (including lack of knowledge; politics vs. agriculture; relationships with Robert Anderson, Fred Seaton, Douglas McKay; Seaton and a mining bill); USDA's relationship with the Labor Department (including position on migrant labor; international relationship with Mexico and other countries); Benson's comments on various Cabinet and staff personalities (Charles E. Wilson, [John Foster] Dulles, Arthur [E.] Summerfield, Martin [P.] Durkin, Sinclair Weeks, Herbert Brownell, Wilton B. Persons, Eisenhower, Oveta Culp Hobby); other Presidential advisors; Eisenhower's stag dinners; Eisenhower on quitting smoking; Eisenhower's concern for the health of his cabinet; Eisenhower, Benson, and prayer; Benson and Mamie Eisenhower's 75th birthday party; Eisenhower's interest in Mormon family home evenings.

[Dwight D. Eisenhower Library Oral History, interview by Dr. Maclyn Burg, May 21, 1975]