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TAIT

TAIT, EDWARD T.

(OH-384)

157 pages

OPEN

Member of Eisenhower's campaign train, 1952; Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC), 1953-55; Executive Director of SEC, 1955; Special Assistant to President Eisenhower, 1955-56; member of Federal Trade Commission, 1956-60.

DESCRIPTION: Interview #1. Personal background: education, military service during World War II, and return to law school. Appointment as law clerk in Pennsylvania Superior Court. Comments on law practice and his interest in difficult cases. Relates his interest in politics and his admiration for Senator Taft. Comments on meeting Taft and on Taft's personality. Mentions Truman's low image in 1952 and the need for a unifying force for the country. Brief comments about Thomas Dewey. Talks about the Taft-Hartley Act and labor leadership. Discusses Pennsylvania Republican politics and organization.

Interview #2. Talks at length about his service in General Eisenhower's campaign train: work as advance man and help in arranging for Eisenhower's appearances in various locations. Talks about Eisenhower's attitude toward Senators Jenner and McCarthy as factor in making arrangements in Indiana, and explains problems involved in determining who rose with Eisenhower in motorcades. Mentions political considerations involved in asking President Herbert Hoover to participate in campaign in San Francisco area. Discusses proposed overture from General Eisenhower's staff to General Douglas MacArthur and MacArthur's negative response. Comments on Eisenhower and his concern for Mamie. Mentions relationship with Sherman Adams and with James Hagerty. Remarks about the wear and tear of campaigning. Mentions Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech. Return to law practice after 1952 election.

Interview #3. Talks about becoming Executive Assistant to Chairman of the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and describes his duties. Talks about SEC Chairman Ralph Demmler. Discusses SEC legislative program: the need to change securities laws in order to permit earlier public dissemination of information about forthcoming securities issues. Mentions Dixon-Yates contract and its political ramifications. Talks about SEC and proxy fights involving Allegheny Corporation, New York Central Railroad, and Montgomery Ward. Tells about meeting with President Eisenhower who offered him position on White House staff in charge of presidential nominations and appointments. Comments on Charles Willis and patronage problems: difficulty in determining policy functions within agencies and the need to bring into government service personnel loyal to the Administrations policies. Describes responsibilities concerning presidential nominations and appointments: types of jobs coming to Tait's attention, his review function in checking recommendations, the President's insistence that any appointee be able to do his job, the use of FBI reports in determining suitability. Comments on

clearance of prospective appointees with home state senators, the “Blue Boy” file, and political pressure exerted on behalf of individuals.

Interview #4. Continued discussion of Tait’s work with appointments: tickler file regarding expiring terms, procedures for replacing incumbents and interviewing prospects, decisions not to reappoint some incumbents. Mentions Harold Talbott and Edmund Mansure as individuals asked to resign. Talks about pressure of Tait’s job and its effects on his health. Discusses his appointment to Federal Trade Commission and aspects of the Commission’s work: Commission members and their background, the Commission’s approach to cases, Tait’s dissenting opinion in case involving jurisdiction of Federal Trade Commission over advertising by insurance companies, and philosophies of Commission members. Talks about his decision to resign from Federal Trade Commission in 1960 and return to law practice in Washington, D.C. with firm involved in corporate law. Describes problems faced by men staying in government too long. Assesses strength of White House staff and comments on the President and Sherman Adams. Also mentions General Persons, Andrew Goodpaster, Gerald Morgan, Jack Martin, and Bryce Harlow as strong White House staff members and describes Nelson Rockefeller as an able and cooperative man while on the White House staff. Expressed opinion that Eisenhower’s White House staff was much more open than President Nixon’s staff.

[Eisenhower Library Oral History Project, interviews by Maclyn Burg, 1974, 1975 and 1976]