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BABEL

BABEL, FREDERICK W.

OH-344

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Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, 1953-56

DESCRIPTION: PART I: Educational background; military service; civilian relief work in Europe (incl. assignment by Mormon church, experiences in Europe, first acquaintance with Ezra Taft Benson, Benson's choice of Babel for the job, anecdotes concerning discharge from Army and preparation for European assignment, serving as Benson's German-language translator, anecdotes concerning Babel's feelings about the church's blessing for the mission, his impressions of Benson's character, and their trip to Europe); Babel's admiration for Benson; serving as the secretary to church officials in Salt Lake City (incl. the nature of the work, Babel's qualifications for the job, meeting the needs of the overseas Mormons); Babel's career plans (incl. training as a management consultant, working for ZCMI, interest in developing leadership programs for the Mormon Church); results of Benson's appointment as Secretary of Agriculture (incl. Babel's handling of Benson's correspondence, concerns about being offered a political assignment on Benson's staff, anecdote regarding his decision); Benson's character (incl. an anecdote regarding his sense of humor, his perception of responsibility, the scope of the Secretary of Agriculture's job, an anecdote regarding an Eisenhower-Benson conversation about resignation); matters of principle (incl. Cabinet decisions involving Benson, President Eisenhower as a man of principle, anecdote regarding Eisenhower's attitude toward self-importance); Babel's appointment as assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture; Eisenhower's appointment of Benson as Secretary of Agriculture (incl. influence on decision by Milton Eisenhower and Sen. Robert Taft, Benson's expertise for the job); working with the President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization (incl. leadership, aspects of the work involved, appraisal of Nelson Rockefeller's executive ability, agricultural expertise of Ralph Roberts and John Davis, Babel's role, assessment of the effectiveness of the committee leadership-- Milton Eisenhower, Arthur Flemming, and Rockefeller, maintaining the confidentiality of the committee, purpose of the reorganization); restructuring the Agriculture Department (incl. Babel's responsibilities, anecdote concerning economist Louis [H.] Bean, staff reassignments); Benson's relationship with staff members who belonged to the Mormon Church (incl. overall concerns, general comments about Ralph Roberts, Arthur D. Haycock, Hulda Parker Young, Daken Broadhead, Lorenzo N. Hoopes, Milan D. Smith, Miller F. Shurtleff, Mark Kirkham); changes in

the department after restructuring (incl. general results, attitude of press secretary John C. Davis, after-effects of a mishandled press release); Babbel's observations about Benson's personality (incl. attitude toward people he worked closely with, effect of ecclesiastical responsibilities).

PART II: Early responsibilities in the Agriculture Department; the second Hoover Commission report (incl. effects of the mishandling of the report, concerns involving records management, efforts to implement recommendations in the Agriculture Department); Eisenhower's thoughts on the military man as President; Eisenhower's method for tackling problems; scope of Benson's responsibilities; Benson's assistant secretaries (incl. comments about the responsibilities and the characters of the men involved); Benson as a decision-maker; staff organization (incl. meetings, access to Benson, anecdotes regarding Benson's office temperature and the use of prayer at staff meetings); Benson's personal beliefs (incl. fasting and prayer, his church obligations, attitude toward duty); Babbel's work with the Production and Marketing Administration (incl. implementing a restructured program of information management, benefits of the program, anecdote regarding the budget for the Soil Bank program and Babbel's resignation, proof of the new system's reliability).

[Dwight D. Eisenhower Library Oral History Project, interviews by Dr. Maclyn Burg, Part I, November 12, 1974; Part II, February 5, 1975]