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SICILIANO

SICILIANO, ROCCO C.

OH-9

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Special Assistant to the President for Personnel Management, 1957-59.

DESCRIPTION: PART I, Tape 1: Born Utah; Georgetown Law School; legal assistant to an NLRB board member for 2 years; interested in labor law and labor relations; moved to Chicago and became corporate officer of a company building oil refining chemical processing plants, 1950-53; responsible for legal and labor relations; became acquainted with president of Plumbers and Pipefitters Union, Martin P. Durkin, who was later appointed Secretary of Labor by Eisenhower (Dec., 1952); advised by Sen. Wallace F. Bennett (R-Utah) to apply to Republican National Committee for possible job; named Assistant Secretary of Labor (1953); Durkin resignation; James P. Mitchell appointed new Secretary of Labor; irony--Siciliano, appointed to department by a Democrat (Durkin), had never been politically active; served as Assistant Secretary of Labor from Aug. 24, 1953, to Sept. 1, 1957; DUTIES: in charge of Employment and Manpower Activities (involved supervision of Bureau of Employment Security, Bureau of Veterans' Reemployment Rights, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training), represented Department with Congress (responsible for all congressional activities of department), responsible for Federal Civil Defense activities, represented Labor Department by testifying before various committees, appeared before the Cabinet, served on the Advisory Council for Economic Growth and Stability under Dr. Arthur Burns (chairman, Council of Economic Advisors); changing role of Assistant Secretary of Labor (as of Aug. 24, 1953) from "political reward" job to one of line officer responsibilities; representative from Labor Department to Office of Defense Mobilization Committee under Dr. Arthur Flemming; continuing changes in Labor Department following 1957; Siciliano's feelings about responsibilities of assistant secretaries; Siciliano's assessment of Secretary of Labor Mitchell: best Secretary of past 40 years [roughly the 30's through 60's], great administrator and knowledgeable of departmental affairs, demanded knowledgeable subordinates, somewhat insecure personality, strictly "business" at all times; Mitchell and reorganization of Department (changed it from trade union identity to government department of stature); problems of gaining status with Congress (a Mitchell weak point: he couldn't understand the importance of cultivating Congressional leaders) and the Executive Branch (from President on down, no one appreciated importance of trade union movement / philosophy); trade unions' attitudes toward Mitchell; George Meany on Mitchell; Siciliano's appointment to White House staff (July, 1957) as Special Assistant to the President for Personnel Management (a new position created by Executive Order); responsibility for management of the personnel system of the Federal government (2,300,000 employees at time); not a patronage-type job; position involved approximately 77 different systems; Siciliano's attendance at Cabinet meetings and involvement with Cabinet officers and agency heads; Eisenhower's 1958 submission to Congress of a compensation proposal (first of its kind); Siciliano's office in EOB and staff; idea for position originated in the Rockefeller Commission (Commission on Organization of the Government) and was signed into being by Executive Order; President Kennedy later abolished position; Siciliano's thoughts about importance of job, need for its continuance, the opposition of career people to reorganization; Siciliano's observations on the government's attitude toward trade unions within the Federal sphere; Congressional reaction to President Eisenhower's pay proposal (1958); Siciliano's initiation of a comparability pay schedule study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (government vs. private industry pay plans), findings later submitted by Kennedy to Congress and adopted.

PART 1, TAPE 2: Siciliano's inter-actions with White House staff: Sherman Adams, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget [Maurice "Maury" H. Stans], Gen. [Wilton B.] Persons, Bryce [N.] Harlow, [Robert] "Bob" Merriam, Jack [Z.] Anderson, [Gerald] "Gerry" Morgan, [Edward A.] "Ed" McCabe, [David] "Dave" Kendall; Siciliano's thoughts on Sherman Adams' administrative abilities and the changes after Adams left White House; the story behind Eisenhower's signing of the "holiday on Sunday" bill; the staffing system of the White House and the problems Siciliano saw as a result of the military staffing model (as an example of the way things worked, Siciliano discusses the dual Panamanian/ US pay system problem and how it was handled); Siciliano's reasons for leaving government service; Siciliano's reflections on Eisenhower's periods of illness; further comments on the President's affirmative pay proposal and the Panama situation and Siciliano's role in these; Siciliano's assessment of criticisms of the Eisenhower administration's "standpatism" policies; social relations among White House staffers and subsequent effects on staff areas of responsibility; comments on various White House staff personnel; processes involved in appointing White House staff; Siciliano's directive to executive agencies regarding recognition of labor unions representing Federal employees (eventually ordered by President Kennedy, 1961, with Executive Order 10988); provisions of the Clark bill (Sen. Clark, Pennsylvania) regarding permanent establishment of an Office of Personnel Management and subsequent recommendations for such an organization.

PART II: Reflections on Sherman Adams: relationship between Siciliano and Adams; Adams' character traits; the Bernard Goldfine investigation; weakness of Eisenhower and White House staff in handling affair; deleterious effects of investigation on Adams (mental and physical) before resignation, Sept. 22, 1958; Eisenhower's "disconnection" with Adams' affair; effect of Eisenhower's illness (after 1956) on his responsiveness to situations; conservative Republicans' desire to oust Adams from White House; Senator Knowland's enmity for Adams; Adams' position in White House; Governor Adams after his resignation; press handling of Adams' case; Siciliano's temporary assignment to assume responsibilities in area of minority issues; setting up the meeting between Eisenhower and Negro leaders-- the Reverend Martin Luther King, [Jr.], Roy Wilkins (NAACP), Lester Granger (Urban League), and [A. Philip] Randolph (AFL-CIO's Pullman Car Porters); briefing the President and the meeting discussing various problems of race relations--civil rights, use of federal funds, etc.

[Dwight D. Eisenhower Library Oral History, interviews by Dr. John E. Wickman, July 7 and 13, 1967, and April 2, 1968.]