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STEELMAN

STEELMAN, JOHN R.

OH-94

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PRCQ

Assistant to President Truman; liaison official re. transition to the Eisenhower administration

DESCRIPTION: Professional background in labor relations (incl. experiences in the Conciliation Service of the Labor Department, Director of the Office of War Mobilization & Reconversion, assistant to President Truman); comments about the nature of the Eisenhower-Truman relationship (incl. differences in character, an anecdote involving the friendship between Truman and Sen. Robert A. Taft, reasons behind Truman's running for office in 1948); an anecdote concerning President Herbert Hoover's opinion of Eisenhower as Presidential timber; Steelman's unique relationship with both Democrats and Republicans (incl. anecdotes about his non-political government positions, his friendships, and his role in the Republican search for a Vice-Presidential candidate); comments about Taft as a Presidential candidate; an anecdote relating to Steelman's running the government while Truman campaigned; anecdotes involving the Eisenhower administration (incl. Eisenhower's appointment of Sherman Adams, Adams' character and approach to his job, Eisenhower's expectations of Adams, Eisenhower's dislike of anything pertaining to Truman's methods, results of Eisenhower's expectations of Adams); the evolution in White House staffing (incl. historical precedent, the Truman re-organization, changes by later administrations); working for orderly transition (incl. serving as liaison between the two administrations, anecdotes about methods for dealing with Cabinet members, an anecdote regarding how to handle Eisenhower, working with Adams, comments about the permanent White House staff); pressures applied to Presidents to make changes (incl. Eisenhower's desire to countermand Truman's orders, an anecdote about Richard Nixon and a campaign promise); an anecdote revelatory of Adams' manner in dealing with the public; comments about several incoming aides; the effects of stress on high level positions and several anecdotes concerning Truman's interest in this area; Steelman's concerns regarding Eisenhower's attitude toward Adams' position and responsibilities; Truman's interest in an orderly transition between administrations (incl. his instructions to his Cabinet regarding information transfer, his own experiences when President Roosevelt died); Roosevelt's reasons for selecting Truman as Vice-President; general comments about staff jobs; Steelman's explanation for Adams' problems with his job; labor disputes (incl. Roosevelt's handling of labor problems at the White House, policy changes made by Truman, advice to Eisenhower and Adams).

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[Columbia University Oral History Project, interview by Ed Edwin, March 20, 1968]