INTERVIEW WITH

Ezra Taft Benson

on

May 21, 1975

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

EZRA TAFT BENSON

In accordance with the Provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Ezra Taft Benson, of Salt Lake City, Utah, hereinafter referred to as the donor, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of personal interview conducted on May 21, 1975, and prepared for deposit in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall not be available for use by researchers during the donor's lifetime. After the donor's death, access to the tape recordings shall be for background use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or quote therefrom.

(3) During the donor's lifetime the donor retains all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the copyright in both the transcripts and tape recordings shall pass to the United States Government. During the donor's lifetime, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcripts (but not the tape recordings) without the donor's express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the open portions of the interview transcripts, but not the tape recordings, may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the interview transcripts, but not the tape recordings, may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

Ezra Taft Benson
Donor

March 19, 1990
Date

Archivist of the United States

4/5/90
Date

This is an interview being conducted with President Ezra Taft Benson in Mr. Benson's offices in Salt Lake City on May 21, 1975. Present for the interview President Benson, Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: May I call you Mr. Benson; is that all right?

MR. BENSON: Yes, of course.

DR. BURG: It comes easily for me.

MR. BENSON: I've been called worse things than that.

DR. BURG: One of the things that interested us was your work as executive secretary of the National Council of Farmers Cooperatives in Washington, D.C. in the period 1939-44. We would just like to have you sketch in for us the nature of the work that you did and what kind of interests you would be representing in the course of that work. And then also, in that respect, how that may have aided you or proven to be a detriment during your time as secretary of agriculture.

MR. BENSON: The National Council of Farmer Cooperatives is a federation of 4,600 farmers, cooperative marketing, and cooperative purchasing organizations, covering the United States, many organizations in every state of the union and Puerto Rico. And this was the national headquarters. It was our responsibility to look after the interests of these organizations, in Washington particularly.

BURG: Almost as a lobby group.

BENSON: Well, it was more than a lobby group. We did very little lobbying as it's usually understood in Washington. However, I did appear before committees. If there was legislation pending that had a bearing on the farmers' organizations, particularly their business organizations, that's what these were, I would appear. If there was problems with any of the departments or agencies of government, I would represent the cooperatives in consultation with them. I would also spend a lot of time out in the field. I travelled into every state in the union and would attend annual meetings, seminars with management, discussing the problems of management--pricing, marketing, packaging, all the rest, the whole field of marketing. We had all of our cooperatives divided into divisions based on the type of organization they were. For example, we had all the grain cooperatives together in one division, the dairy cooperatives in another, fruits in another, vegetables in another and livestock in another. And sometimes we'd have a separate meeting with this department, just this department and their representatives. I'd speak at many annual meetings all across the country and occasionally would attend some international conferences in which we had an interest. For example the first international conference on agriculture, I guess ever to be held in modern times was held at Church House in London, and I

was one of the four agricultural representatives at that international conference. I was concerned primarily with the operation of these business organizations, which were cooperatives organized under the authorization of Congress under the basic legislation which was known as the Capper-Goldstead Act, which authorized farmers to join together in a mutual effort to market their products or purchase their supplies.

BURG: Now you yourself had come, not only from farm background when you were a boy, but you had been operating a farm in Idaho and then had risen from that, followed this career with the cooperative movement.

BENSON: Yes. I was born and reared on a farm in southeastern Idaho. Later my brother and I purchased a farm and operated it, alternating between college and the farm. And then later, when I finished my college work or what I thought was my college work, and did a year's graduate work at Iowa State University, I went back to the farm and then was more or less drafted to be a county agricultural agent in my home county. I refused to go anywhere else, although it was against policy to serve in your own county. But the county commissioners wanted me to serve there and I had to serve there and my brother then was on a mission in Denmark for the church; so I had the responsibility for the farm. So finally they worked it out with the university. You notice the three way arrangement, federal government,

the state--

BURG: Land-grant, land-grant colleges and the county.

BENSON: That's right. And so I worked out an arrangement so I could be the county agent, the county agricultural agent in my home county, so I could sort of keep an eye on this farm. They authorized me to live on the farm, but I think that would not be wise. It would be subject to criticism and justly so. So I moved off the farm and put a man on the farm. But I was in contact with him every few days.

BURG: He acted then as manager.

BENSON: That's right, as manager and operator. But I was only there for a couple of years and then I moved on to the state basis as an agricultural economist and marketing specialist, that was my title, for the whole state.

BURG: State of Idaho.

BENSON: That's when I got into the cooperatives more, although my major in my master's degree, my thesis, was in the area of marketing, national marketing. My undergraduate work was animal husbandry and marketing, livestock and marketing, but I have a lot of crops work too. So then from the state, I organized in the state, I took the

leadership in organizing a state cooperative council of all the cooperatives within the state working together on their common problems, and quite successfully. That took me occasionally to the annual meeting of the National Council of Farm Cooperatives because they had a division for state councils. You see?

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: And it was there that I was more or less drafted to head up the national organization. And from that time, of course I was spending my full time on marketing. Of course I've always been active in the church, and I was president of first stake or diocese of the church in the western area while I was with the coop council. From there I was called to be a member of the Council of Twelve, which is part of the ruling body of the church.

BURG: So what people probably did not know in 1953 was that your experiences with the farmer cooperatives had both given you quite a bit of insight into the hows and whys of the American political process in Washington D.C.--

BENSON: Yes.

BURG: --But you also were widely known throughout the ranks of agriculture, had been for years. Something that I suspect the

American people weren't aware of.

BENSON: I think that's right. Five and a half years I'd been in Washington and during that time I had many trips to Washington. Well I should say, all during the time I was in Idaho, eight years, in service on a state basis, cooperative was a federal program, I would make at least one trip a year to Washington to attend the conference for example, other economic meetings that had a bearing on our agriculture in Idaho. And I wouldn't go back there to appear before committees; I went back there to attend meetings with representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and representatives from other states. So I had a rather broad contact. And then of course I'd been a member of the board of the American Institute of Cooperation, which is the educational arm of the cooperative movement. The land-grant colleges are part of that too. And then at the time I was called to be a member of the twelve, I was chairman, as I remember, I was chairman of the board and a member of the executive committee of that national organization. So that gave me a broad contact with the educational arm of agriculture and the cooperative movement.

BURG: So one would have to say then probably in respect to this last question, that these contacts most certainly helped you--

BENSON: Oh, there's no question about that.

BURG: --in the work you did.

BENSON: My whole life and interest had been in agriculture.

BURG: Now is it fair to also say that not only did the contacts assist you, that they influenced you and influenced you for the better do you think?

BENSON: Well I think I was so close to the farmers' problem, having been a farmer, having been raised on a farm and then having worked with farmers practically all my life that I think the answer to your question is yes.

BURG: All right, let me move on--

BENSON: Yes, because you've got a lot to cover--

BURG: Yes, we'll do our best. You described your appointment as Secretary of Agriculture in Crossfire, and you indicated that you never had, at least as of 1962, you never really pinned down precisely how this had happened to you. You had talked with Milton Eisenhower and others. Have you, since then, had an opportunity to find out any more?

BENSON: No. And I've never tried.

BURG: You never have tried.

BENSON: I've never tried except I knew that I was well known and favorably known. I've never been in any serious controversy over agriculture problems--

BURG: Mr. Benson, when we see what happened to you in the next eight years--

BENSON: That's right. I was a firm believer in free enterprise, I still am. And I felt that these farm cooperatives were part of free enterprise and a very important part and had a place in our national economy. And I felt I knew the problems of the farmer, and I was sympathetic to those problems, and I was opposed to many of the things the government had been trying to do to control and regulate agriculture. I felt that the best answer to the farm problem was to give the farmers great freedom to operate their own farms in their own way without government interference or control and trying to fix prices. There had't been a serious attempt in history, really, in agriculture to fix prices nor to control production. There hasn't been a successful attempt. And I spent a lot of time on research. And when I was with the coop council, I went on national

hook-up two or three times opposing price controls and government regulation of agriculture. So I had all that background, and the more I went into it, the more certain I was that the best thing for farmers is a free market without government interference. Of course, I understood that there were certain things that need to have government supervision, but that the best thing government could do generally was to assist in probably research and expansion of markets, but not regulating the farmer. You understand that if you've read Crossfire.

BURG: I'll ask Milton Eisenhower and see if I can find from him what the process was--

BENSON: Well some asked Senator Taft one time if I was his candidate, and you remember his answer.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: He said, "No, I can't say that he is." Taft was apparently pleased; we're about sixth cousins.

BURG: And besides the blood relationship, you had been a Taft supporter.

BENSON: I had. And I had not been an Eisenhower supporter. You've

got all that in Crossfire, no use my repeating it. Milton would know more about that probably than I. And I'll tell you another one who would know something about it and that's Carl Butler up at Cornell. Now Carl was with Abbaco Corporation, and Carl's one of the young men I took with me--I had Fred Babble with me part of time--but I took Carl Butler with me on this first swing through the country.

BURG: That 20 day trip--

BENSON: That 20 day trip, Butler was with me and helped to arrange the contacts.

BURG: We'll ask him.

BENSON: And he's up at Ithaca.

BURG: Okay, we'll check it out with him too. Now, some of the aspects of your relationship with the President are certainly well covered in Crossfire. We would like to ask you, what, as you now look back upon it, what did the President contribute to the development of United States farm policy?

BENSON: Well, I would say very frankly that the President had come from a rural state, Kansas, and he lived in Texas, but he didn't

know an awful lot about agriculture, and he knew he didn't. But the President wanted to know, and did his homework. He asked me to supply him with material to read, and he read. And he had a very, I thought, excellent way of arranging, organizing, and managing a cabinet meeting. And he held cabinet meetings. He believed in counsel. He didn't think that he or any man had all the answers. And if I had a matter as a member of the cabinet on agriculture that involved policy, possible change in policy, I would be expected to prepare a position paper on this particular matter and submit it to the staff so it could be circulated to the other members of the cabinet. So when that item came up on the agenda the following Friday, all members of the cabinet would know something about it or at least would have had opportunity to know something about it. So we could have an intelligent discussion on it, and it wouldn't be just the Secretary of Agriculture who knew about it. And I thought that was a very safe procedure that he followed. And he followed it rather religiously. To me, that was very important, because agriculture was so mixed up in the minds of people--so much confusion, so much pulling and hauling. It was not the economics of agriculture that was the most difficult, it was the politics of agriculture. But in order to move forward at all, we had a great educational job to do. And we had to start with the cabinet and

the President, because we had to get in the minds of people a clear picture of what this was all about. We were spending, oh, hundreds of millions of dollars and accomplishing very little. And what is the farm problem? What is it? Is there a solution? Yes, there's a solution. So we went into every phase of this very carefully. I set up an advisory committee of, I think, about twenty men, Agriculture Advisory Committee. I speak of it; Eisenhower formalized it later. He believed very much in that commission. I had the best men I could find in America. I paid no attention to their politics. I wanted the best talent I could find to serve on that committee. Didn't get any pay for it, except, as I remember, we paid their transportation and food while they were there. And Eisenhower was very much in favor of it, so much so that he had his picture taken with them and so on. And often we would discuss--now this has been before the commission, he'd sometime raise the question, "What does the commision think about this?"

And I'd say, "This has been studied by the commission. I wouldn't think of bringing something here of a major character that hadn't been reviewed by the commission."

BURG: Test it against this board of opinion.

BENSON: Test it against this board of opinion. And Eisenhower

liked that. And in the cabinet he was a great fellow to have discussion. He moved ahead expeditiously, didn't waste a lot of time. But he was glad to get the views of different people. Then he started these stag dinners; you've heard about those?

BURG: Right.

BENSON: And some people would say that was political. There may have been some of that in it, but I think Eisenhower wanted to pick some brains. He wanted to find out what they thought about different things.

BURG: The impression you got, Mr. Benson, seems to me that you spoke of it in your book too, is that anytime in the after dinner portion of one of these stag affairs, anytime the conversation drifted away to matters outside what he wanted to talk about, he brought them back to the subject that he had in mind.

BENSON: He did, he did, very much.

BURG: Now, did he ever at any point during the eight years, let us put it this way, strenuously disagree with a proposal that you were making?

BENSON: Well let me say this: The first good talk we had after he

was inaugurated, we agreed on one or two basic things. First, we agreed that if a thing was right in principle, it ought to be done. And if it was right in principle in the long run it would be good politically. Now we both believed that. And he believed it. And secondly he told me that I would never be asked to support any policy or program I didn't believe in. And he was true to that commitment. There was one time he went against my counsel on agriculture. I think it was in 1956, political year, he was up for re-election. And I know the great pressure that was placed upon him by political leaders--some of them in the cabinet and many of them in the congress, some of them out in the field--to raise support levels for farm products, the basic crops, political crops, I sometimes called them and he did too. But I opposed it. I said, "Mr. President, it's wrong in principle, and it'll do more harm than good in the long run." But the pressure was great, and he raised some of the supports administratively, which he had the right to do as President. He told me after that he regretted it, that it was a mistake so far as agriculture was concerned. That's the only time I can recall when he went contrary to my counsel on a matter of agriculture. On the basic philosophy that we were trying to encourage, we were in agreement. That is, less government in agriculture, more freedom for the farmers, for government to help

on research, expansion of markets, but not in the operation of the farm or the pricing of farm commodities, and that a government warehouse is not a market. When I took office it was costing us a million dollars a day for storage.

BURG: Yes. Incredible sum.

BENSON: And we had lost our markets abroad. Fifty percent of our cotton market been lost. We'd priced our cotton out of the market, and of course encouraged increased production in Egypt, in Mexico, in other places.

BURG: To take up that slack?

BENSON: Yes--

BURG: To take advantage of the market.

BENSON: Markets we've still not fully regained. We had some very serious questions, and sometimes Eisenhower went against his staff.

BURG: I understood from the book that there were people--

BENSON: You've got that one case where we went down to Georgia; he was down there playing golf?

BURG: Yes, indeed.

BENSON: Well, that's one of the best examples; I think that is the most prominent example where he went against his staff. And that was on a farm bill that had been passed. It was, well I called it an economic monstrosity; it was terrible as a farm bill. Never intended to help farmers--

BURG: An omnibus sort of thing.

BENSON: Yes, intended to embarrass the President because if he signed it the farmers would not be happy; there was nothing in it for farmers really. And if he vetoed it, why he'd be criticized of course, "He went against the farmers," you see?

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: And when Sherm Adams called me on the telephone after that bill -- you know they sent it to the department that's concerned and we either prepare a draft of a veto message or an endorsement of it and we prepared a veto message, send it over to the White House. And Sherm Adams called me, he said, "Ezra, don't you have any political sense?"

I said, "Probably not very much, Governor. What is it?" And then he told me--this farm bill.

He said, "Did you ever hear of a President vetoing a farm bill

in an election year?"

I says, "I don't know." But I said, "This is not a farm bill. This is a political bill." I said, "The President can't afford to sign this. Isn't anything in it for farmers. It's nothing but a political bill to try and embarrass him." And then I explained the economics of it.

He said, "Well the staff all feel he ought to sign it--he must sign it."

"Well, I'm sorry," I said, "I can't agree." And I said, "My staff feel as I do. And I've had my economist go into it in detail." And he was a good economist; later Eisenhower put him on his staff. That's Don Paarlburg; he's back in agriculture now.

But he said, "Well the boss is down in Georgia. I guess we'll have to carry it to him."

I said, "All right, we'll carry it to him." So we went down on the plane, me and two members of my staff and Gabe [Gabriel] Hauge and two other members of the--

BURG: Fred Seaton went down on that trip?

BENSON: I'm not sure.

BURG: Nor am I, but that can be checked out.

BENSON: That can be checked out. But I know that Gabe Hauge went down because Gabe Hauge was sort of the economist there at the White House.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: So we went down to see the boss. And we talked agriculture policy all the way down. We were friendly. I had a good working relationship with the staff always. But sometimes we didn't agree with some members of the staff.

BURG: Mr. Benson, would they admit for example on the trip down to Augusta, could you get them to admit that that bill was really a disaster as far as farmers were concerned, but they were going to hold the line because, politically, they thought it was expedient to have it passed?

BENSON: Yes, they felt that it was expedient, and they felt it was not too disastrous - - might be some good come from it -- at least there'd be some goodwill come from it and so on. But anyway we went down, and I think the next morning we went out to the place where Eisenhower was living--it was close to the golf course. He didn't get there very often so I guess they arranged this quarter for him as close to the golf course as possible so he wouldn't be worrying

about police escorts and things of that sort. So we went over to the quarters the next morning and I, being a cabinet member of course he invited me into his office first alone. And he was just opening some mail. He said, "I've just been opening my mail. They bring down the important mail for me." And he said, "There is no letter here this morning that advises me to veto that farm bill." And he said, "I know that's why you've come."

I said, "Mr. President, are there any letters from farmers?"

He said, "No, not one."

I said, "Of course not. This is not a farm bill. It's a political bill." And I said, "You remember the first real conversation we had after you took office. We decided that if a thing was right in principle, it ought to be done."

He said, "Yes, I remember." And then he said, "I know it's right to veto this farm bill." He says, "I'm going to veto it." Never even heard his staff. Then he called them all in and he said, "I'm going to veto this farm bill."

And Gabe Hauge said something to the effect, he said, "Well, Mr. President, the last thing that Governor Adams said was, 'If you should decide to veto the bill be sure it's not done while the national Republican committee's in town.'"

BURG: They were to be there I believe on a Wednesday, and this was sort of a Monday situation.

BENSON: Yes, something like that. And Eisenhower had to go before them the last evening of the day they spent, the last day, and speak to them. And he said, Governor Adams said, "Whatever you do, don't veto it while they're in town."

And I said, "Mr. President, aren't we all on the same team?" I said, "How do you think these leaders are going to feel? They're here for three days and you talk to them as the last part of their three day meeting. Then they go home and read the headlines in the papers that the President has vetoed the most controversial bill of this session of Congress."

And Eisenhower smiled just a little and he said, "Well, I don't very often go against my staff." He said, "In this case the staff is wrong and the secretary is right." He said, "We'll send up the veto message, and then I'll appear before the national committee and tell them why I vetoed it." That's what he did. He was acclaimed, his action was acclaimed as an act of courage and statesmanship. It helped him in the election. Isn't any question about it. Even with the farmers it had helped him, because they knew it was the right thing to do. And all the way along we had the support of the largest of the farm organizations, over three fourths of all

the farm families in America that are in farm organizations are in the Farm Bureau, and the Farm Bureau was opposed to this bill even though it was a farm bill. And my philosophy was so close to theirs that I was accused of dominating the Farm Bureau and Charlie [Charles B.] Shuman, who was president of the Farm Bureau, was accused of dominating me, because our philosophy was so close together. Well there's nothing of that domination; it was just that we all had the same solid philosophy, based on sound economics.

BURG: Well I was going to ask you also, harking back to the 1952 campaign, the speech which had been made--that one in North Dakota--must have been most difficult for you to live with then as a newly appointed secretary of agriculture.

BENSON: Yes. It was. And it was a mistake. I think it was a mistake that he made it. But he was under pressure.

BURG: Did he ever say to you privately later on that he felt it had been a mistake to make that remark?

BENSON: He alluded to it. I don't know that he came out that definite, but he said something to the effect, "Our job would be easier now if we hadn't of endorsed 90% of parity." But you see his endorsement was only for the one year, the law that was on the books.

BURG: That's really all that saved you in a way and that got you through some congressional hearings obviously--

BENSON: Yes. It helped.

BURG: --from the testimony in your book. I saw you equivocating very carefully. You had that one-year limit on it.

BENSON: That's right. And I agreed that I would support what was on the books till it expired. And that was one year. But I never endorsed the principle of high, rigid price supports. And Eisenhower never did either. From a long-time policy standpoint, he never did. Well I don't remember. Now I'll tell you one time when we did have a contact. The annual meeting of the National Dairy Association was held at Pennsylvania State College, on the campus.

BURG: I remember that from the book.

BENSON: And [Milton] Eisenhower was president. And he was there.

BURG: At his farm.

BENSON: On the campus. No. He was there at the meeting when I spoke, Milton was.

BURG: Milton was there. Yes, he was president of Penn State.

BENSON: Pennsylvania State--Penn State. And that's a great school, land-grant college, and Milton was doing a good job as president, I felt. And they extended every courtesy to me while I was there, but this was during the meeting. We had dairy representatives from all over the nation at their annual meeting. And right then we had six hundred and sixty-six million pounds of butter in cold storage. And government had price supports on butter so high that the consumption of butter was going down this way and the consumption of oleomargarine was going up this way and the two lines had just crossed for the first time in our history.

BURG: Oh, they had?

BENSON: Yes.

BURG: Just about at the time of that meeting.

BENSON: Just about the time. And that's expensive storage--cold storage for butter. So the dairymen were losing their markets, and the markets were being taken by the competitor, oleomargarine. And so that was pretty much my theme I think. I had a bad habit--I guess you call it bad--of laying things on the line economically just as hard and cold as I could based on the facts, so they'd register with people, and not give them a lot of soft soap, try and build up good

will immediately. And so I was talking about the solution to the dairy problem. We had to get our supports down, and I'm a dairy farmer; I milked cows a good part of my life, the arm-strong method, when I was a boy.

BURG: Holsteins as a matter of fact.

BENSON: Yes. And so I knew whereof I was speaking. And I said, "We've got to eat our way out of this. We've got to get our supports down. That will stimulate consumption in the marketplace, and then we've got to promote greater consumption." And I said, "I've noticed here on this campus, a land-grant college campus, not one milk dispenser."

BURG: No automatic vending devices for it.

BENSON: No. Now you can buy Coca-Cola and about everything else, but no milk. And this is one of the great dairy states of the Union. Well when I was through, Milton responded, and he responded very favorably and helpfully. He said, "I want to pledge to the secretary of agriculture that when he comes back again or when anyone comes back again, they're going to find milk dispensers at different places on this campus." And he did it. Well of course that didn't make any great difference in the consumption of dairy products, but

it helped. And I promoted that clear across America, in factories, everywhere.

BURG: This may have been one of the occasions too where you made a strong impression on Milton, which in turned would have been passed on to his brother.

BENSON: Yes. Well, could have been. But you know Milton's the first man I saw when I went to New York for that interview.

BURG: Yes. He's the man who talked with you.

BENSON: Milton was the first one that I learned that the President was going to offer me the job. I never expected that when I went back there. I thought he was interviewing a number of people, and I thought I had some good reasons why I wouldn't be secretary so he would pick someone else. And I was sincere. I thought he ought to get a secretary from the mid-west, that's the heart of agriculture. Utah a relatively unimportant farm state. Idaho's more important, my native state, but I lived in Utah. So I was sincere in trying to help him help the country. But Milton said that he thought it was all pretty well settled. So I went in with that knowledge; so I bore down even more on my reasons than I would have done otherwise.

BURG: It didn't work too well.

BENSON: No, it didn't work too well. And it's all right.

BURG: Well I was asked, by one of my staff, to ask you about, in fact the way it was expressed was, that the USDA shared responsibilities battlegrounds with other departments. And he wanted me to ask you about various inter-departmental relationships during the course of your secretaryship, for example, the USDA and State Department. He wondered if you could discuss the struggle of the inception and application of PL-480. Was there any conflict between ICA-foreign aid-agricultural development programs and interests, markets of U.S. farmers? Was that a problem?

BENSON: I wouldn't call it a serious problem. PL-480, of course, pleased the State Department I think. They thought we could move surpluses, cut down costs of carrying, and build up some good will abroad.

BURG: If it were done carefully.

BENSON: If it were done carefully, yes. And at the same time, it would bring relief to people who were underfed and would acquaint them with American grown farm products, which might result in expanded markets for farm products later.

BURG: Had the agricultural experts with State Department been transferred to USDA by the time PL-480 went into effect?

BENSON: I don't believe so. I can't remember that--that date. I think maybe it was about the same time, as I recall. But you see we had these agricultural attaches all over in state, many of them were wearing striped pants. They weren't doing anything for agriculture, and when these were established they were to be the eyes and ears of agriculture abroad. They were to try and open doors for new exports of farm products; they were to keep us informed back home on agriculture matters and policies that might affect us, might affect the demand for our products; they were to keep us informed regarding imports that the United States that might be competitive with the domestically grown farm products. They weren't doing it. They were doing this job and that job. We just felt they were not real representatives of agriculture, many of them. And so that's when we asked the President to consider transferring them by executive order, which he did and I think that took some courage. I think [John Foster] Dulles opposed that. I'm not sure.

BURG: I was going to ask you.

BENSON: But I rather think he did. And I said, "No, we're not trying to build an empire over here. We're trying to reduce our

personnel." We did reduce our personnel--entirely too large. And you may not realize it, may be I didn't have it in the book, but every budget except one, the congress gave me more money than we needed and wanted.

BURG: Yes, you got it into the book--

BENSON: I got that in the book.

BURG: An astounding thing.

BENSON: Yes, astounding thing.

BURG: They kept giving you more than you wanted to have.

BENSON: We were not asking for these agricultural attaches simply to build an empire.

BURG: Did the state department people, the top leadership aside from Mr. Dulles--obviously Mr. Dulles never did clearly indicate to you how he felt, but was there any prolonged resentment from state at losing these people?

BENSON: I don't believe so. I don't believe so. If so they pretty well kept it to themselves.

BURG: Hard to believe that anything like that would not have gotten to your ear, had there been--

BENSON: Yes, yes, had there been opposition. Of course, there was something that got to my ear and that was when we started screening these men.

BURG: Yes, I remember that.

BENSON: You remember the ? case, for example.

BURG: Yes, precisely.

BENSON: That was partly our fault, poor handling. I was away; I had a new executive secretary because my executive secretary had to leave because his partner in business in California had had a heart attack and to save the business he had to leave and take it over. But we had to screen them because some of them were just not trained in agriculture. And so we started screening them, and of course some people started screaming as we started screening.

BURG: Fred [Frederick W.] Babbel told me about that little problem too.

BENSON: Yes. Fred could tell you about it.

BURG: Now let me ask you about treasury department. What was the relationship with treasury, for example, on expensive supports? How did treasury view that?

BENSON: George Humphrey was with me all the way a hundred percent.

BURG: So on export development, balance of trade, balance of payments, the things that you speak about with regard to Humphrey in the book, he was perhaps your most apt pupil in the cabinet.

BENSON: Yes. And probably the most ardent supporter unless it was Arthur Summerfield. I never proposed a thing that I can remember that I didn't have the support of those two men in the cabinet.

BURG: Were you ever able to determine how this came about? How did these two men react so favorably to the--

BENSON: They reacted favorably because they thought it was right. They thought it was good for the country and right for farmers and right for the taxpayers generally. And they thought in the long run it would be good for America.

BURG: Now Humphrey went to the trouble, and I think that would be a safe way to put it, he went to the trouble of consulting with you, getting your help in educating himself in agricultural matters.

BENSON: Yes, yes he did.

BURG: Now did Arthur Summerfield do that?

BENSON: Yes he did.

BURG: He, too, did it.

BENSON: Yes he did. But Arthur, I think, dug in more on his own maybe than Humphrey. Arthur did more on his own and didn't ask for so much help, but oft times he'd ask a question, and oft times I'd send him material bearing on the question he'd asked. But George and I had a very, a very fine relationship. And our conversation was almost entirely--"What's good for this country."

BURG: So these two men are outstanding supporters of you. Let me just break from the path long enough to say--on that cabinet were there any members that you could identify who fairly consistently put up the biggest arguments against you?

BENSON: No, I don't know--. I'd say many of them didn't know much about it.

BURG: Did that stop them from talking, Mr. Benson, or did they talk anyway?

BENSON: Not always. There were some that, like the vice-president, who would often ask, "What does it mean to us politically?"--may not use those words, but that's what it meant--"What does it mean to us politically?" And that was never very helpful, to me. From my standpoint it was never very helpful, because I believed what Eisenhower and I had agreed upon--that if it's right in principle and good for the country, it'll be good politically. May take a little longer, but it'll be good politically. But most of them didn't dig in very deep on agriculture.

BURG: Did they tend to accept--

BENSON: Maybe they thought that there were other things more important. Yes they tended to accept it.

BURG: Accept your recommendations.

BENSON: Now Bob [Robert] Anderson, when he came on, Bob was quite active in agriculture, in the agriculture subject, having come from Texas and I guess being close to agriculture. And Bob was in full support, near as I could tell.

BURG: How about Mr. Seaton when he took over as secretary of the interior?

BENSON: I had a great affection for Fred, but he and I didn't always see eye-to-eye. Seaton was a great political mind. I mean he would often raise the politics of the question. What does it mean politically? He was pretty close in his philosophy to the vice-president. When it came to matters of agriculture, he would often raise the question, "Well now, what's this going to do to us politically," in the great mid-west especially.

BURG: Had his predecessor, Douglas McKay--

BENSON: Doug, Doug was--

BURG: --had he been more sympathetic, I mean less--

BENSON: I'd say a little more. Doug seemed to be very friendly to me as a westerner. We both came from out in that country. But he was more political than some other members of the cabinet, but a fine personality. Well both he and Fred--I got along with all of them, had no difficulty. The nearest I came to having difficulty with Fred was on a mining bill which Fred was supporting, which the administration was supporting, but which I refused to testify in support of. And Fred had asked me--the President didn't ask me--the President wouldn't ask me because he knew it was contrary to my philosophy. It was a subsidy for mining, small minings out in the

west. And we went over the bill very carefully in the department, in staff; we had our economist check it first and make the report in staff meeting. We all agreed it was a government subsidy that was not needed and not sound. Therefore we decided that if we were asked, we would represent our views. And we were asked--Fred asked us if we'd go up and testify in support of it. I sent him a copy of the analysis of the bill, as I remember, and told him that we could not support it. And I sent copies of that to Eisenhower, to the President and his staff. So we heard no more of it.

BURG: Oh, Mr. Seaton did not seek your testimony then?

BENSON: No, No, not further. But he went to us without going through the President, which I thought was wrong. He came straight crosswise to me to try and get us to support this, as I remember it. And we made the analysis of the bill and made our report and sent a copy to the President.

BURG: So presumably that would have been the first time that the President would learn that he had been by-passed.

BENSON: Possibly. Although someone on his staff must have known. Fred was quite close to the staff. Probably closer to the staff than I was.

BURG: He had served on it for a period of time.

BENSON: He'd served on it, that's right. Now I was sorry we had to do this, but we couldn't support it. We thought it was not sound economically or politically in the long run.

BURG: The labor department, Mr. Benson. There's an interesting question raised, again by one of my staff. His original remark, "What was the relationship between the labor department and USDA on protection from migrant labor, on president's committee on migratory labor, on unionization, minimum wages for farm laborers?" And then he went on to say, "Is it fair to say that USDA saw the farm owners as their clients and that farm labor was not an important client?" What would your reaction to that question be?

BENSON: Well I don't know. That's a rather complex problem. We recognized that this problem is pretty much an area problem.

BURG: That is, the Southwest--

BENSON: Texas, the Southwest, and California. Most of the agricultural area of the country didn't worry about it too much--

BURG: Migrant labor that is.

BENSON: So we didn't feel we should get into it too much on a national basis. Now we did aim to keep acquainted, keep abreast of the situation. We tried to represent the viewpoint of the farmers, and also the farm laborers too, but principally the farmers, the producers. We knew what their point of view was. They wanted to get production, and they had to have labor. And the American laborer, many of them, were resisting any stoop labor, picking tomatoes for example. And we had evidence to show that it was just hard to get labor, American labor. They could make more money elsewhere, and they didn't like the type of work. And that's one of the things that caused some of these industries to move into mechanization. We never thought of such thing as a tomato picker. We thought that would be one of the hardest crops you could possibly imagine to mechanize. But California farmers had hundreds of acres of tomatoes and when they're ripe, they have to be picked. And they just had trouble getting this stoop labor, and so they had to have these Mexicans in to help. Otherwise, they'd quit growing tomatoes or else they'd have to mechanize. Well as a matter of fact, they did mechanize. They got a tomato picker, if you can imagine, that worked.

BURG: Gently, I assume.

BENSON: I told them I couldn't believe it. And they finally got

cherry pickers, too, shaking the trees, shaking the cherries off the tree, and we're using them right today. We're using them in the church on the big farm out here in--I'm chairman of the board of directors of all of our ranches and farms, commercial operations. But farmers were driven to it because they couldn't get the kind of labor that would get up on the ladder and pick cherries all day.

BURG: In my home state, state of Washington, it was the apples, peaches, pears--

BENSON: Apples, sure. Same thing.

BURG: I don't know that they mechanized that.

BENSON: I don't think we use shakers on apples yet.

BURG: I don't believe so.

BENSON: No.

BURG: No, I think they're still done the hand way.

BENSON: But cherries is such a detailed, hand-picking job, you know.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: And it's a slow job. You can pick a tree of apples alot

faster than you can a tree of cherries. So these things were happening and we pointed out the trends--that if the farmers can't get their labor then what happens is there'll be less jobs for labor and more mechanization. So we'd point these things out, but we didn't get into the controversy. We did realize, and we so indicated, that people should not come into this, permitted to come into this country illegally. If they're going to have a law, we got to enforce it. We were not enforcing it. We're not enforcing it today. We're winking at it. And they were doing it in those days, pretty much. Now we had a friendly relationship with Mexico. We went down there when they had that outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

BURG: Yes, I remember.

BENSON: We were right there almost overnight and helped them, because we thought it was in our interest. We didn't want it coming across the border infecting our cattle. So we moved on these things.

BURG: Now that was a dangerous situation. You got small thanks for it, of course, from much of the rural Mexican population who didn't want that drastic solution.

BENSON: That's true all over the world. We're getting no thanks. Most generous nation under heaven, getting practically no thanks--anywhere. See what's happening in Laos today, for example. That

whole peninsula going communist and think of the millions and hundreds of millions of dollars we've--well, won't get onto that.

BURG: Let me ask you to, in a way, summarize for me--I'm keeping an eye on our time.

BENSON: How much time?

BURG: We have half an hour. We'll finish this side in just a few minutes.

BENSON: Did I allot two hours?

BURG: Yes you did.

BENSON: Must have got me in a moment of weakness.

BURG: I think your secretary alloted me that time in a moment of weakness.

BENSON: All right.

BURG: Let me ask you to run around that cabinet table, Mr. Benson, and tell me about these men and women.

BENSON: Come over here where I can see. I don't have too much to say about them. They're all good men and I enjoyed every association I had.

[Interruption]

BENSON: I'll say I enjoyed my associations with every one of them without exception. You know them all by their faces.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: I don't know whether I could even name them all now. But you can see there was just one man between the President and I, Charlie [Charles E.] Wilson.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: Now Charlie, I had a great affection for him. Very outspoken. Didn't pretend to know much about agriculture, but always had an opinion.

BURG: And quite free with it.

BENSON: Very free. Very free with it. The same was true of Dulles. Dulles didn't claim to know much about it but he'd always try to measure the impact on our foreign relations, which is perfectly natural.

BURG: Any move that we made domestically in agriculture, he thought of it in terms of now what would that do--

BENSON: Yes. Yes. What's the impact going to be on our relationship with our friends abroad?

BURG: Yes. In India or wherever it might be in agriculture.

BENSON: Yes. For example, as I remember it, he was vigorous in his support of our shipping, oh, boatloads of grain to India. And I was a little slow on it because I feared they wouldn't be able to handle it when we got there. What we'd find on the first shipment? They had to carry it off the boats on their backs. Didn't have facilities for unloading. When they got it unloaded, they didn't have any warehouse to put it in. And when they finally got a place to put it, they didn't have transportation to get it to the interior of the country. In the meantime, a good part of it was being eaten up by rats. Well, it's not very good policy just to haul grain abroad for rat food. So sometimes proposals that seem feasible as we talked around the table from the standpoint of the effect on our relationship abroad wasn't very practical, even though the need was there and it'd been nice if we could have shipped it there--and we did do a lot of shipping under 480 and even before.

Arthur Summerfield, of course, you know. Arthur, he had a sort of a broad view of the whole spectrum. Of course he looked at the political impact, but at the same time he looked at the economics of it, too.

BURG: Oh, he did. His major contribution as you saw it was the breadth of his background?

BENSON: Yes, he saw the whole picture. And of course he'd been the chairman of the campaign, hadn't he? Eisenhower campaign.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: And was the postmaster. He was very friendly all the way through and recognized the problem and recognized what was needed for the solution and supported the policy. If the President and I came forward with an item to propose, I can't ever remember Arthur opposing it. He was usually in harmony with what we were trying to do. And Dirksen didn't stay with us very long.

BURG: Durkin.

BENSON: Durkin, I mean.

BURG: Martin Durkin.

BENSON: Not Dirksen. Dirksen was with us all the way, Senator [Everett] Dirksen.

BURG: Yes.

BENSON: He really was.

BURG: Martin Durkin was there for six or eight months, I think.

BENSON: That's right. But I enjoyed him.

BURG: You found him a sympathetic man?

BENSON: Yes, generally speaking. Generally speaking he was sympathetic and recognized that it was not his field, but we had a little talk about this Mexican labor. But always on a friendly basis, and he got my point of view and I got his to protect the American worker. He seemed to recognize that we were forcing our farmers to go into greater mechanization which would mean less American labor. So you see it's not as easy as it may appear on the surface.

BURG: Did he seem to feel out of his depth or uncomfortable with the group?

BENSON: Yes. Yes. Yes, he seemed to feel a little bit, sort of a stranger.

BURG: Did Mr. Wilson, or Mr. Humphrey, ignore him or move to try to set him at ease? Do you recollect their relationships with Durkin?

BENSON: Oh, I don't know. I didn't, I was not close enough to note that one way or the other. He didn't seem quite at home with the group. And yet he was a fine personality. My association with him

was pleasant. Who's that? These were not cabinet members. Weeks.

BURG: Weeks. Sinclair Weeks.

BENSON: Now Weeks was a solid supporter of the farm policy. And very outspoken. He's from New England. I felt he had strong support back home for what we were advocating. And he would sometimes express the viewpoint of New England. And the viewpoint of New England was of greater conservatism, people standing on their own feet and less government subsidies and controls and so on, government regulation.

BURG: They would also represent the view of smaller farm holdings.

BENSON: Smaller farmers, too. Yes.

BURG: Certain amount of dairy, fruit crops.

BENSON: That's right.

And this man, what's his name? Oh, his name slipped me.

BURG: I don't know because Mr. Nixon is in the center of the group.

BENSON: What's that name? That's Seaton, isn't it?

BURG: Yes, Fred Seaton.

BENSON: Persons.

BURG: That's Henry Cabot Lodge and Wilton B. Persons.

BENSON: Oh--Weeks, ah, Marion B.

BURG: Fulsom?

BENSON: Fulsom. This is Fulsom here. Peterson, that's Val Peterson. So if we were going around this way, so he's over here. Persons. No this is Persons.

BURG: And Lodge.

BENSON: And Lodge and Seaton and Humphrey and Nixon. Let me pick up and go around the other way. [Percival] Brundage, Gray, James B. --, Summerfield --

BURG: I see Herbert Brownell.

BENSON: Dulles, Wilson, Benson by gosh, they haven't got his name on here.

BURG: It would have to be

BENSON: It's [Herbert] Brownwell.

BURG: Brownell.

BENSON: Brownell. That's Brownell there. Brownell was essentially

political in his point of view. I mean he seemed to be very busy in the political aspects and I never felt he took the time or had the time to become well informed regarding agricultural issues. Now I hope I'm not misjudging him. We were always very friendly, and I enjoyed him. But he never seemed to worry too much about agriculture except the political impact of some of the things we were considering. He was very close to Nixon. And his philosophy and Nixon's philosophy and Seaton's philosophy seemed to be pretty close, pretty much the same.

BURG: That is less concern with the economic effects of the changes of agricultural process in--

BENSON: Less concern--that's right, that's right; and the welfare of the farmer; but more the political impact: What does this mean politically? What's going to be the political reaction out in the field? Is it going to mean greater support for the administration or less support? What's the immediate effect going to be on the congressional election next year? Things like that, and not so much the long-time aspects.

[Interruption]

BURG: You were saying that one of the best political minds that Eisenhower had on staff was Wilton B. Persons.

BENSON: Yes, I think so.

BURG: Why? What evidence did you have for--

BENSON: Well, just as we met in staff meetings and Persons often attended cabinet meetings, and the President invited his comments. The President was very fair and tried to involve everyone when we were discussing an important matter. He'd have the top members of his staff often meet with us, and he'd sometimes ask for their views, even though they weren't official members of the cabinet, because he wanted to get at the problem--he wanted to get the best solution possible. I think the President had uppermost in his mind--"What's best for America?" And to some people he placed that ahead of what's best for the Republican party, and some politicians didn't like that. They thought that what's best for the Republican party, as Charlie Wilson said about General Motors, is also best for America. But Eisenhower didn't always agree with that. He would sometimes oppose members of the cabinet on various questions because he thought what they were proposing was too political and that they were putting too much emphasis on the politics of it and not enough emphasis on the principle and the long time effects and benefits to the country.

BURG: Now going back to that group, before we leave it, how about Oveta Culp Hobby, for example? How did she strike you as a human

being and cabinet officer?

BENSON: She was a very strong supporter of the President, always. She did her homework; she usually come well prepared if there was something from her particular department. I never felt that she was particularly in place around the table, and yet she conducted herself admirably, I thought, and had a good understanding of her department. And would enter into discussion on some of the other matters. Now she came from Texas; Texas is a great agricultural state so of course; she'd often express herself on agriculture. I always felt that I had her support pretty well on farm policy matters. I can't ever remember her opposing any major proposal that we brought to the cabinet. She didn't enter into a lot of discussion usually, but when she did I felt there was a contribution, on my philosophy and Eisenhower's philosophy in agriculture. I never felt that she was in opposition to what we were proposing.

BURG: You've categorized her as a strong supporter of the President.

BENSON: Yes.

BURG: Would you categorize yourself, also, as a strong supporter of the President's philosophies and--

BENSON: Yes, generally speaking. I think so. I think Eisenhower had some men around him that counseled with him, some of them outside the cabinet whom I don't know, but I knew then that they were counselling, which counseled him on some things that were not particularly helpful to him.

BURG: Can you give me an example or examples of who these people might be in--

BENSON: No I can't. I can't remember names now, but some of them he played golf with; he was close to them.

BURG: Some of these would, therefore, be men prominently placed, let's say, in corporation business.

BENSON: Yes, and were close to Eisenhower. Oh, they would probably visit with him in the White House, have dinner with him and so on.

BURG: Part of the stag group perhaps, too.

BENSON: Yes, but these were more than the stag group. These stag groups generally were one-time dinners. That was a very broad--he would ask cabinet members, or he at least asked me to suggest names to be invited to his stag. He wanted them from all walks of life, not just cronies of his. Because I made two or three suggestions

and I found later he had them, he invited them. For example, I put down the name of the president of the Mormon church, David O. McKay. He would often come in to the cabinet meeting on Friday and these stag meetings were on Thursday, as I remember, Thursday evening, and he'd come in and he said, "Boy, we had another of our stag dinners last night and we had so-and-so here." And then he'd go on from there. But this particular time I was alert of course because I had put the name of David O. McKay down. And he said, "We had," he called him doctor, "Dr. David O. McKay, president of the Mormon church there." He said, "He was the life of the party." Then he'd say some little thing about him then go on, and maybe two or three others. But he nearly always made a report to us. And it was usually enjoyable what he said, very brief.

BURG: Some idea, Mr. Benson, of what perhaps had been discussed? The general themes discussed in that--

BENSON: Sometimes he'd say that. I remember one time he brought up the question of smoking. He said, "After the dinner we were in the Blue Room," or whatever room they were in, and he said, "One of the men asked me, 'Why, General, have you quit smoking?'" He said, "Well I feel superior to you birds that are subject to this little weed." And then he told us how he quit smoking. He said, "I told

them," and we got it, you see, as he was reporting on the dinner. He said, "When I went for my checkup at Walter Reed Hospital, they checked me all over and then they told me that I was in good shape. They said, 'There's one thing, Mr. President, that would help you further. It would be better for your health if you threw those cigarettes away.'" So he said, "I went out and got into the car and there was half a pack laying on the seat, and I just tossed them out the window." He said, "I haven't touched one since". So he said, "I feel superior to you birds."

BURG: An exercise in will power and--

BENSON: Exercise in will power, and you haven't got enough will power to overcome this little weed or something, I don't know. But anyway it was interesting, and he was very considerate of others. I don't know whether I ever mentioned this in the book, but Ike, if you had a toothache, you wouldn't be surprised to have a telephone call from him if he knew it. If you had anything seriously wrong you'd certainly get a call from him. And he called me one day, no reason for a call that I could think of. He said, "Ezra, how long since you've had a physical check-up?"

And I said, "Oh, I don't know. Probably a couple of years."

He said, "I'm making an appointment at Walter Reed Hospital for

you," and he says, "I want you to honor it. And I want you to go up every year, as long as you're here to have a complete check-up, and I'm telling them up there." So I went up and had my check-up.

BURG: He did that for all of you on the cabinet, I understand.

BENSON: So far as I know, he did. But he certainly did it for me. But I probably wouldn't have gone. I was full of vim and vigor and I didn't feel the need to have a check-up, but it was a wise thing. And then another thing that I don't know that I put in the book--when he was ill, I was out in Denver when he had that heart attack. Did I mention that I talked about my faith in prayer? And I said, "We have what we call a little, sort of a private prayer roll from the first presidency--that's three men and the twelve, fifteen men, the policy making body of the church. When we meet in the temple on Thursday, we gather around in the prayer circle and we have a few names of personal acquaintances, people we know, and we pray for them in our regular prayer as a group." And I said, "I'll be very happy to have your name placed on that roll."

He said, "I'd like that very much. I'd appreciate that." So we had his name on the prayer roll in the Salt Lake temple during the time he was critically ill. And then when Mamie was ill, he suggested it to me.

BURG: Oh, he did?

BENSON: Yes. He said, "Would you like to do for Mamie what you did for me? Have her name on the prayer roll?"

I said, "Yes, you bet. We'd be happy to." And of course, you know that I had something to do with introducing prayer in the cabinet meetings.

BURG: Right. You spoke of that in the book. I was going to ask you, too, your mentioning Mamie, I thought immediately in terms of her more recent illness, but I was going to ask you: What were your relationships with the President and Mrs. Eisenhower and your contacts with them after 1961?

BENSON: Practically none. Eisenhower invited me to one or two functions which I couldn't attend because of commitments. But Mamie invited me to her birthday party, 75th birthday party, at the Washington Hilton. And she invited me to sit beside her at the head table, which I hadn't expected, because practically all the cabinet, former cabinet members who were alive were there, some of them my senior. And she invited me to sit at the head table, and I didn't know this till I got there. She was seated, and, as the individual cabinet members came in, they had an announcer announce them. They'd stop for just a minute. They'd announce them and then assign them their seat. My wife would come in with me, and then she'd

go down in the body at a special table. Well I appreciated that and I didn't know, I hardly understood why she did it, in a way. And yet my wife was close to Mamie. They're very friendly. Not that they spent a lot of time together. But let me tell you a little thing that happened. Mrs. Benson had a luncheon for the cabinet wives--

BURG: I remember.

BENSON: You read that.

BURG: The daughters helped out.

BENSON: So you know all about that. But Mrs. Eisenhower, before she went to bed, wrote a note to Flora. And then in the church, we, for years, have had a weekly, what we call a home evening, on Monday nights usually. It is now, on Monday nights; it used to be on any night. But where the family get together and they usually read the scriptures; they discuss family problems as a council; they have maybe some activity of some sort, maybe some songs and recitations--whatever the children could do, you know, to build up family unity and family solidarity. Well Eisenhower had heard about this. So he said, "I'd like to witness one of those sometime." And so we arranged it. We had it down on J. William Mariott's farm down at Front Royal, Virginia, and President Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, and Mamie's mother and I think his sister--

BURG: Mamie's sister, Mrs. [Frances; Mrs. G. Gordon] Moore.

BENSON: Yes. And two or three others of the Eisenhower clan were there that night. We have a picture of it. Maybe it's in the classifier. And I had my family there, and we went ahead just as though the President was not there, with a regular, typical, Mormon, family home evening. It's now spread across a good part of the world. There are states, many states in the nation that have announced family-home-evening month trying to encourage greater family unity and solidarity. Canada, several of the provinces up there have done it. But at that time it was not known outside the church, except through conversation. But Eisenhower just wanted to see it in operation; so we had one. We had our six children there; I think we had them all there. No, I think Reed was a chaplain in the air force then, but the others were there. Anyway they took part and just as though the President wasn't there. And he joined in singing; we sang a song or two around the piano as we did as a family. He joined in. And he often commented about our family because he'd met them all. Little Beth is now the mother of four children. He'd met them all at the inauguration and other functions. And the girls, of course, were at different functions at the White House.

BURG: I see that I'm running up on the time that you've given me; so at this point I'll thank you very much for this time this morning. It's deeply appreciated.