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SHELDON

SHELDON, JAMES

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PRCQ

Public relations director of the Nationalities Division Democratic National Committee

DESCRIPTION: PART I: Educational activities; experiences in project planning for the Massachusetts' office of the Emergency Relief Administration; running for Congress in 1938; Relief Administration work in Connecticut (incl. research and statistical projects, directing the Adult Education Through Forums project); return to the Massachusetts' office (incl. the work of the statistics section, the White Collar Project); political activities (incl. involvement in Democratic politics, anecdote regarding a 1940 racial segregation incident at Washington's Ambassador Hotel); association work with the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League (incl. purpose of the organization, Nazi activities in the United States, counter-activities of the League); involvement with the Democratic National Committee (incl. the impact of minority groups on the 1948 election, formation of the Nationalities Division, anecdotes involving Senator Theodore Francis Green); the work of the Nationalities Division (incl. significance of the ethnic vote, organization of the Nationalities Division, use of foreign language papers, importance of the Nationalities Division to the party platform, identification of the Nationalities Division with foreign policy questions, anecdote regarding Vice-President [Richard M.] Nixon, organization of activities within the division, effects of Eisenhower's war-hero image on the ethnic groups); the areas of concern for the 1955 Nationalities Conference in Chicago (incl. the delegates, the issue of discriminatory immigration laws, concerns regarding refugee legislation, the question of captive nations and other international issues, the matter of discriminatory barriers in political and employment status); effects of the Nationalities Division's efforts (incl. on the Democratic platform, on the Presidential and Congressional elections, on the special election of Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin); Eisenhower as a force in local elections; further activities of the Nationalities Division during the 50's.

DESCRIPTION: PART II: Activities in New York (incl. involvement in local politics, anecdote regarding the [Vincent R.] Impellitteri mayoral campaign); activities involving the foreign language groups during the 1952 Presidential campaign; planning operations for the Nationalities Division in 1955 (incl. Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams' assumption of leadership, financial difficulties, effects of the ethnic vote on local elections, areas of emphasis); strategies and issues of the 1952, 1956 campaigns; gearing up for the 1956 campaign (incl. appointing chairmen for the various nationality sections, coordinating activities, organizing the states, getting ethnic members into leadership positions); Republican operations in the area of nationality votes; ethnic newspapers and radio programs (incl. success rate of press endorsements, strategies to counter-act Republican spending, use of foreign language vs. English language papers, use of non-English language radio programs, Republican use of radio, credibility of foreign language papers with their readers, anecdote regarding the ethnic press and Robert [F.] Kennedy during his run for a Senate seat, overall importance of using foreign language press and radio programs in political campaigns); value to Sheldon's job of not having

ties to a particular nationality group; activities before and during the 1956 Democratic convention; the 1956 campaign (incl. strategies for using Governor [Adlai E.] Stevenson in ethnic-related activities, anecdote regarding Gbedema, Finance Minister of Ghana, and Harry [S] Truman; anecdote regarding a Stevenson television speech; general comments about Stevenson's character; the campaign and its aftermath.

DESCRIPTION: PART III: Activities of the Nationalities Division between 1956-1960; developing plans for the 1960 campaign (incl. early preparations for the platform committee hearings, strategies for keeping the Nationalities Division in the forefront of the Democratic Party, comments about the leadership of the various language sections); observations concerning Republican activities in the area of ethnic affairs; changing the name of the Nationalities Division; effects of the Nationalities Division on the party platform (incl. gathering and identifying issues information, feelings of discrimination among nationality groups, anecdote regarding a Polish-Negro incident, immigration and naturalization issues, presentation of findings to the platform committee on the immigration issue, the captive nation-self-determination question, and miscellaneous issues); nationality groups at the convention; evaluation of the opinion/analysis information used in preparing platform recommendations; the convention (incl. activities involving delegates from nationality groups, press releases, anecdote involving John F. Kennedy's acceptance speech); opening the campaign (incl. details of Kennedy's press conference at the Overseas Press Club, the Hyannisport conference on nationality groups, effects of the press conference); general activities of the Nationalities Division (incl. organizing the various nationality groups, preparing radio tapes, involvement of [Jacqueline] Jackie Kennedy, press releases and other publications, personal appearances and endorsements, anecdote involving Robert Kennedy); evaluation of the nationality groups' impact on the election (incl. Democratic vs. Republican activities, ethnic appointments, the religious factor, the question of Eastern European policies, campaign techniques); the Robert Kennedy Senate campaign (incl. factual data and anecdotal information concerning campaign activities); Eisenhower's relationship with ethnic groups; Sheldon's observations about his work with the Nationalities Division (incl. relationships with the candidates, understanding of the job's requirements, preparing speeches for candidates, anecdote concerning Harry [S] Truman, anecdote concerning Averell Harriman, campaign thank-you letters, checking up on campaign workers, anecdotes concerning working with various ethnic groups); comments concerning Truman's attitude toward Eisenhower; general observations about attacks on candidates and parties; anecdote concerning results of personal comments in political debate; comments concerning end-of-campaign activities.

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[Columbia University Oral History Project, interviews by John Luter, Part I, December 15, 1972; Part II, December 28, 1972; Part III, December 29, 1972]