Harry S. Dent Papers, White House Special Files, 1969-1972

1969-1972
Descriptive Summary
Title: Harry S. Dent Papers, White House Special Files, 1969-1972
Dates: 1969-1972
Collection Number: 6829676
Creator/Collector: Dent, Harry S., 1930-2007
Extent: 6 linear feet, 7 linear inches; 15 boxes
Repository: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
Abstract: The Harry Dent file group includes information pertaining to his tenure as Deputy Counsel and as Special Counsel to the President. Dent’s responsibilities included liaison with the South and the many Federal agencies. Some topics in the Dent files are busing, the nomination of Clement Haynsworth to the Supreme Court, support of Congressional candidates, and the textile industry.
Language of Material: English
Access
Collection is open for research. Some materials may be unavailable based upon categories of materials exempt from public release established in the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974.
Publication Rights
Most government records are in the public domain, however, this series includes commercial materials, such as newspaper clippings, that may be subject to copyright restrictions. Researchers should contact the copyright holder for information.
Preferred Citation
Acquisition Information
These materials are in the custody of the National Archives and Records Administration under the provisions of Title I of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-526, 88 Stat. 1695) and implementing regulations.
Biography/Administrative History
Harry Shuler Dent, Sr., was born on in St. Matthew, South Carolina on February 21, 1930. He earned a Bachelor of Art degree in 1951 from Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina. It was also in 1951 that he married Elizabeth Inez Francis. From 1951 to 1953, Dent served in the United States Army. He rose from second to first lieutenant in the 24th Infantry Division, Far East Command. Between 1955 and 1965, Dent worked as an Administrative Assistant to United States Senator Strom Thurmond. It was during his tenure with Senator Thurmond that Dent earned his LL.B degree from George Washington University Law School in 1957 and a LL.M degree from Georgetown University Law School in 1959. In 1962, Dent co-founded and chaired the Senate Staff Prayer Breakfast Group. He was also the Chairman of the Thurmond Speaks for Goldwater Committee in 1964. The following year, in 1965, Dent became a partner in the Dent and Kennedy law firm. He remained with the firm until 1969. He also became Chairman of the South Carolina Republican Party in 1965 and kept the position until 1968. Also, in 1966, Dent was manager of the South Carolina Republican State-Wide Campaign. In 1968, he was Manager of the Thurmond Speaks for Nixon-Agnew Committee. Dent was hired as Deputy Counsel to President Nixon in 1969 and soon thereafter became Special Counsel to the President. He held the position until his resignation in December 1972. After resigning from the White House Staff, Dent returned to practicing law, first with the law firm of Whaley, McCutchen, Blanton and Dent in 1973-74 and then as senior partner at Dent, Kirklend, Taylor and Wilson until 1981. In 1973-74, Dent served as General Counsel to the Republican National Committee. In 1974, Dent pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for a campaign finance violation related to his part in the 1970 “townhouse operation” that raised money for the Nixon administration. He received a short sentence of unsupervised parole. Dent remained active in politics and, in 1976, served as the Southern Campaign Manager and member of the National Campaign Steering Committee of the President Gerald R. Ford Reelection Campaign. In 1977, he was a member of the Campaign Advisory Committee of the Republican National Committee and served as the President’s representative to the Sabine River Compact Administration in 1977-78. Dent also worked on George H. W. Bush’s 1980 presidential campaign. In 1981, Dent left his law practice in order to study at Columbia Bible College (now Columbia International University), where he earned a Certificate in Bible Studies in 1982. From 1982 to 1985, Dent was the Director of the Billy Graham Lay Center in Asheville, North Carolina. He then founded the Laity Alive and Serving, Inc. lay ministry with his wife, Elizabeth “Betty” Dent in 1985. Dent published several books between 1978 and 1996. Titles include The Prodigal South Returns to Power (1978), Layman Looks Through the Bible for God’s Will (1983), Cover Up: The Watergate in All of Us (1996), Right vs. Wrong: Solutions to the American Nightmare (1992, coauthored with Betty Dent), and Teaching Jack and Jill Right vs. Wrong in the Homes and Schools: A Primer on Character Education (1996). Harry S. Dent died of complications from Alzheimer’s disease on September 28, 2007 in Columbia, South Carolina.
Scope and Content of Collection

The materials of Harry S. Dent, Sr. cover the years 1969 through 1970. During his tenure as Deputy Counsel to the President, Dent worked under John Ehrlichman until May 1969. He provided legal opinions for Ehrlichman on airline cases which the Civil Aeronautics Board sent over to the White House for Presidential determinations. In May 1969, Dent's responsibilities expanded as he acquired his own staff. He served as a liaison between the President and party politicos, especially those in the South. Dent became a significant link between the White House and the GOP executive committee. In addition to his liaison functions, he handled patronage, requests for special favors, and inquiries from Federal departments, governors, and other public officials. Dent's files also concern busing, import problems in the textile industry and appointments to local post offices. These materials are arranged into four series: memoranda and departmental referral, subject files, planning groups, and thank you and congratulatory letters. The memoranda and departmental referrals series includes requests for special favors. Many of these requests are from southerners asking for autographed pictures of the President. There are various letters concerning patronage and appointments. Employment applications and resumes are frequently attached to correspondence. Statements on proposed political strategies for promoting Republican candidates reveal the administration's involvement with State and congressional elections. This series also contains materials regarding staffing problems in local post offices. The subject files series includes materials on appointments, busing, and poll ratings. Most materials on appointments relate to the employment of loyal Republicans and the ouster of high-ranking Democrats. Correspondence on the Clement Haynsworth nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court reveals Dent's efforts to solicit support for Haynsworth's appointment. Copies of news articles and telegrams in the files disclose one of Haynsworth's supporters and opponents. Due to the busing issue, much correspondence in the files concerns school desegregation and events in local school districts. This series also contains statistical surveys from pollsters and news articles on Nixon's poll ratings. Copies of correspondence relating to weekly planning meetings constitute the planning groups series. The purpose of the planning groups was to clarify the administration's weekly objectives and to coordinate weekly assignments for White House staff members. Weekly calendars of key events and agenda for meetings were used by the planning groups to identify major topics for discussion. Copies of statements of tentative plans and fact sheets indicate strategies for implementing Presidential activities. Included in this series is a copy of the "game plan" for the President's address to the nation on the war in Vietnam given on November 3, 1969, in Washington, D.C. The Staff Members and Office Files of the White House Central Files contains an additional 54 linear feet of Dent material. A tape recording and a transcript of an exit interview with Dent conducted by the Office of Presidential Papers and Archives on December 9, 1972, are in the Oral History File of the Nixon Presidential Materials Project. A photograph has been removed from the collection and transferred to the audiovisual collection (PA78-2-2-13). The photograph has been replaced with a withdrawal sheet and an accompanying electrostatic copy. In addition, a small gold pin with the initials "SM" (silent majority) has been transferred to the museum collection (PA78-2-2-13).

Indexing Terms

Harry Dent
Harry Shuler Dent
Harry S. Dent, Sr.

Additional Finding Aid