

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

**THE TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ACT:
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
JAMES V. AIDALA**

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

Jody A. Roberts and Kavita D. Hardy

at

Bergeson & Campbell P.C.
Washington, D.C.

on

20 May 2010

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

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JAMES V. AIDALA

1954 Born in Akron, Ohio, on 9 November

Education

1976 B.A., Sociology, Brown University

1976 M.A., Sociology, Brown University

Professional Experience

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.

1975 Intern, Pesticide Program, Office of Water and Hazardous Materials

1976 Intern, Pesticide Program, Office of Water and Hazardous Materials

1979-1981 Program Analyst, Office of the Assistant Administrator, Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances

1993-2000 Associate Assistant Administrator, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxics

2000-2001 Assistant Administrator, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxics

Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, Washington, D.C.

1981-1983 Staff Member, Subcommittee on Energy

Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.

1983-1990 Specialist, Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Division

Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

1990-1991 Director of Policy Development

House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Washington, D.C.

1991-1993 Staff Member, Subcommittee on Environment, Energy and Natural Resources

Jellinek, Schwartz, and Connolly, Inc., Arlington, Virginia

2001-2003 President

Bergeson & Campbell, P.C., Washington, D.C.

2003-Present Senior Government Consultant

Honors

1976

Phi Beta Kappa, Brown University

ABSTRACT

James V. Aidala began working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a college intern in the Office of Pesticide Programs; he returned as a policy analyst in the new Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPTS) after graduate school. From Aidala's perspective, there was much uncertainty in the early years of Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), in part due to challenges with the law's specificity regarding polychlorinated biphenyls and, later, asbestos and lead, and in part due to logistical, organizational, and legal difficulties in the early years of TSCA. He also felt that the Reagan administration was fatal to a cohesive toxics program.

After leaving the EPA Aidala then worked for the U.S. Senate, the Congressional Research Service, and the House of Representatives, where he found that political interest was always more focused on pesticides than toxics. According to Aidala, the Toxics Release Inventory and the Pollution Prevention Act provided new tools for the toxics office, but also detracted from the core TSCA responsibilities. When he returned to the EPA as an associate assistant administrator, pesticides continued to be the priority. Though he found that TSCA prevented crises, it was difficult to get Congress interested and TSCA had a reputation as an overly burdensome law. The office used voluntary initiatives and other tools to work "under and around" TSCA, while supporting toxics provisions in new laws like the Food Quality Protection Act.

At the end of the interview, Aidala discusses his belief in the original design of TSCA, but mentions that the legal and political burdens it has amassed require wholesale reform. He also feels that now is the time for reform, given the consensus among stakeholders, even those who have long ignored TSCA, like non-profits.

INTERVIEWERS

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Kavita D. Hardy is a research assistant in the Environmental History and Policy Program at the Chemical Heritage Foundation. She received a B.A. in Chemistry and Economics from Swarthmore College.

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