INTERVIEW XI

DATE: October 28, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Califano's office, Washington, D.C.

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C: Do you know how we hired Hugh Robinson?

G: No.

C: When I was in the Pentagon, Jack Valenti called me and said that the President wanted a black military aide and I started interviewing black military officers, and ultimately interviewed Hugh Robinson, who was, as you know, terrifically presentable and first-rate, and sent him over to the White House. That's it. I just saw his name written down.

G: Did he have any civil rights-related activities?

C: No.

G: Strictly military.

C: It was part of the Johnson symbolism. The black on the Court, the black on the Fed; he was going to have a black military aide. He deeply believed that you had to [have]--today we call them role models, but in those days, he just wanted examples of blacks that had succeeded, lots of visible blacks. And they really provided two things: 1) somebody that blacks could look up to and aspire to be, and 2) some sense in the black community that

was breaking out, that they had access to the power structure, and they were there, and it was very conscious of both of those aspects of it.

G: Was there anything in particular about Robinson other than appearance that led to his selection? His experiences or temperament?

C: No. I thought Robinson was just very presentable, very articulate, real military officer. He was perfect. I remember bringing his wife in to my little office in the Pentagon to make sure everything was okay before I sent him over to, I think it was, Jack Valenti who ultimately interviewed him to give him the final okay.

G: Let me ask you about the violence that summer. You talked about Watts last time but racial violence particularly in the South as seen from the vantage point of the White House. Was this something that would reach the President's attention when there would be a confrontation or a violent episode, an attack on civil rights workers, let's say?

C: No. Was this the time when we had the attack on the three kids driving through or did this happen afterwards? I don't have a sense--I have a sense of--was there a march on Selma or some march that preceded the Voting Rights Act?

G: Right. March, yes.

C: I have a sense of that. I have a sense of our wanting to make sure that that went peacefully and well. I can't remember what actions we took to do that. And [it] became a tool to put pressure on to get the Voting Rights Act passed. I was general counsel of the army when we had the March on Washington with [Martin Luther] King and I don't have a sense of planting FBI agents, planting army intelligence people, getting nuns and priests to get into the march to keep it peaceful. My real sense, which we talked about, my first

recollection at least, let me just go through this, is--God, I'm noticing here he had Hugh Robinson at his meeting with Martin Luther King. You'd have to talk to [Nicholas] Katzenbach, but I do have a sense of Johnson wanting to be geared up to move aggressively on the poll tax and on literacy tests and get lawyers down there.

G: Was the Ku Klux Klan a particular enemy in the eyes of the White House? Did you see the Klan as a source of violence?

C: No, it was not, not in any way that it touched me. It was regarded more as a source of something that might precipitate violence which, in turn, would turn the clock back.

G: Anything else on the signing of the Voting Rights Act?

C: I don't have any real recollections of it. I guess I was still so new I was kind of overwhelmed with the ceremony and pageantry of it. It was an enormously happy and upbeat occasion. It was really a big event. I do remember that. It was my first spectacular bill signing. We may have signed some others before then, but this was the first spectacular. I would see a lot more as time went on.

G: [Everett] Dirksen and [Hubert] Humphrey were both prominent in that occasion.

C: Well, you know, Dirksen was the guy with whom all the compromises were worked out on the civil rights legislation. I was not part of the lobbying effort. I was not intimately involved, by a long shot, in connection with the Voting Rights Act.

G: Any recollections of his appointment of Thurgood Marshall as solicitor general? Remember, he resigned from the circuit court to take that appointment.

(Interruption)

C: Let me mention one other thing just to fill in on Watts while I see Watts here and I think

about it. Sometime after Watts or at some other point I do remember him in a long conversation talking about violence and how we had to do everything we could to cool off the violence, talking about the Negroes pissing on the carpets in the Senate after the Civil War when they came in after Reconstruction. He didn't want them pissing all over all the achievements that we had and we were going to have and that it all go away. He was very conscious of that. As I said, I think he went into a funk and into a hole during the Watts thing. Right after, when he came back to Washington, I remember a conversation with him about that, which I've thought about since then.

Thurgood Marshall--

G: It's on page four in that, the bottom of page four.

C: (Long pause) Well, I remember school desegregation. I don't know what you want. Do you want to hold that for a while?

G: No. I thought we would talk about Marshall first, but if you'd rather--

C: Well, I just see this thing about school desegregation.

I do not have any great recollections of Thurgood Marshall as solicitor general of the United States. I have recollections of Thurgood Marshall when he was solicitor general and we were having the battle over the merger of the railroads north and south and east and west. You probably ought to make a note for us to--because I remember running him down in Atlantic City over Thanksgiving trying to get him to change a brief. Maybe we'll talk about him when we talk about [Abe] Fortas. Okay?

G: Yes. Let's do.

C: Okay, the reorganization of civil rights. . . . . What do you want to talk about now? I see

this memo here. Didn't we talk about that, though, last time?

G: No, not the reorganization of civil rights.

C: Okay, we've got to get--don't we have papers on . . . ?

(Interruption)

For a variety of reasons which I can't remember, and I don't have the attached, whatever the Vice President sent over, which I must have sent to the President. It's not clear what date. All right, the twenty-fourth of August I must have sent--it must have been the twenty-seventh of August. See, here's the problem. That's gotta be-- Let's try and get that.

G: Okay.

C: In August we had the Voting Rights Act passed, an aggressive effort there. We'd been through Watts and the Community Relations Service sitting in the Department of Commerce. We had these institutions attached to the Vice President's office for contracting, I guess, and equal employment--

G: The President's council and the President's committee.

C: We had the Title VI. We had school desegregation going on in order to get in compliance with Title VI out of HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] and the question arose as to how to coordinate that. I cannot remember at what point it really went to the front burner, but it was sometime in September. I did exchange memos with the President on this subject of how to reorganize it. I can't find them here but they're somewhere. Maybe you don't have them either. I had conversations with him about it. One of the things that was critically clear to me was that the Vice President was going to

be taken out of the civil rights business.

G: Why was that?

C: I think it makes no sense under any circumstances for a president to have a vice president in a role that operational but, secondly, I think Johnson was going to take the bruises; civil rights was going to be the President's. It was going to be his issue. It was going to be a centerpiece of his presidency and it was going to be focused on him. [Inaudible].

We had all these civil disturbances going on. There was a point at which he told me to put something down on paper and talk to Katzenbach and Lee White, both of whom I had talked to along the way on this. At some stage here . . . we had a meeting in September. (Long pause) I see various phone conversations with Lee White and Katzenbach and [Harry] McPherson and then a meeting with me on the twenty-first of September. There was a meeting with me in which we went through either a memo of mine or a memo of Katzenbach's--it may have been mine and it was probably that day, that meeting with the President--going over the reorganization of civil rights, which was to abolish these committees, dump most of their work into the Labor Department, move the community relations department from Commerce to the Justice Department, whatever else we did. There was disagreement in the government about it. I think Harry McPherson was worried about whether or not abolishing the Vice President's committees would show some weakening on civil rights and the civil rights groups would think that. The answer to that was, in my mind at least, you put a formal enforcement mechanism in the Labor Department on contracts and have the Defense Department start enforcing its own contracts and we'd go. Finally, the President said to me that he wanted the Vice

President to recommend this. At this point the Vice President knew nothing about it. We talked about it and that precipitated the meeting on September 22 with the Vice President, Katzenbach, Lee White, and myself, in which the President said that he had asked the Attorney General and me and Lee to look at reorganizations and the Attorney General had some ideas is my recollection. Nick read from this memo, basically, that I had prepared. He knew what was in it and went through this reorganization. I mean, blood left the Vice President's face. It was the end of his role in civil rights and he was by far the biggest loser in the reorganization.

G: How did he react? Did he protest?

C: He accepted it. No, he was pliant. He accepted it. He said, "It's what you want to do, Mr. President." And that meeting ended. At the end of that meeting--I don't know whether I stayed behind--well, at some point, I went off with him somewhere and some others, and I see that he talked to me, later that night at 8:05. At some point on Wednesday, the twenty-second, the President said to me, "I want the Vice President to recommend the reorganization and I want the memo in my office tomorrow or the next day." I then went to work on a draft memorandum. I didn't know what to do. I talked to Lee White, who knew the Vice President much better than I did, and I--

G: What did he counsel, do you recall?

C: He was absolutely bug-eyed. At this point there was no counsel--well, what did he counsel about this? I said, "We have to go and see the Vice President." He said, "You have to go and see him." I said, "I want you to come with me. I'm not going to walk across . . ." So I worked that next day, all day, and I produced a draft memo from the

Vice President to the President. I called up the Vice President and said I wanted to come and see him with Lee White, and went to see him. I remember he was literally--we could check his schedule even--getting dressed in black tie to go to a dinner somewhere that night. He asked the staff to leave and I handed him a copy of the memo. The basic premise, as it said here, "I believe the time has now come when operating functions can and should be performed by departments and agencies with clearly defined responsibility for the basic program, that interagency committees and other interagency arrangements would now only diffuse responsibility."

G: Was there any feeling that Humphrey had been ineffective in dealing with some of the crises?

C: No, I think he wanted--well, you know, Johnson had a very mixed reaction about Humphrey. He didn't think he was strong, but he liked him. He liked the tremendous commitment, the zest he had for politics and poor people and what have you. I've told you the story, haven't I, about the difference between him and Humphrey? Not at this occasion but at a later occasion when Humphrey was running for president, we were sitting around his office one day and Johnson was sitting in the rocking chair and I was sitting on the couch to the right of the rocking chair. And he said, "You know, the difference between me and Hubert Humphrey is that when Walter Reuther sits in that couch and says, 'I'm going to burn down the cities of America unless you have a demonstration cities program' or what have you, and he's got that arthritic hand in his pocket. Humphrey's sitting in this rocker. He's trying to figure out how to get that arthritic hand out of his pocket so he can shake hands with him." He said, "I'm trying to

figure out how to get that arthritic hand out of his pocket so that I can cut his balls off." It was that kind of feeling about Humphrey. He didn't think he was strong.

But I think the fundamental motivation of the President, as I read him during that incredible couple of days, was that he was going to be Mr. Civil Rights. Organizationally, it all made terrific sense. We moved the personnel policies into the Civil Service Commission. We gave the Secretary of Labor, the Labor Department, the contract compliance.

G: Justice took over--

C: The Community Relations Service--that's another story--was put into the Justice Department. The memo said, "The Secretary of Commerce agrees with me that this could be more effectively and efficiently carried on within the agencies which have responsibility. Justice--"

G: Did [the] Commerce Department resent losing community relations?

C: Well, let me tell you how they found out about it. The President wouldn't let me talk to Jack Connor until after I had everything done with the Vice President. Let me finish with the Vice President.

I gave this memo to the Vice President and he said, "Can I read it and edit it?" in a sarcastic way. "Can I read the memo?" I gave it to him and we went through it. I said I thought it reflected the meeting the other day. I said I would like him to sign it, and he said, well, he'd like to at least have the courtesy of a chance to talk to his staff. You have to remember what was also happening with this was this took away from the Vice President his largest component of substantive staff. I said, "Fine," and he said he'd talk

to me about it tomorrow. I said, "Well, the President wanted the memo tonight," and we had a little discussion about that.

(Interruption)

We finally worked out an arrangement in which I said, "Well, you don't have to sign it tonight, but I'd like to send it to the President and say that it's done." He agreed to that. Then I said, "I need some of your stationery." (Laughter) You know, it's eight o'clock at night, seven-thirty at night. There aren't a lot of . . . so that I can get it retyped. He gave me his stationery, and I went back and had it retyped and he signed it first thing the next morning. All of this, literally, aside from the time when he sat in a chair and looked at the memo, he was walking around getting on his tux and shirt and [was] not happy. When I left him I then called Secretary Connor.

Secretary Connor, as I recall, was out of town, in New York I think, making a speech. I ran him down. I pulled him off the dais. He hadn't made the speech, sitting on the dais somewhere. I got him on the phone and I told him that we were contemplating a reorganization of the civil rights functions and that we would take the Community Relations Service and move it to the Department of Justice and that some of the other functions that the service had picked up involving schools would go to the Commissioner of Education, disputes involving housing would go to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and those involving employment would go to the EOC [EEOC?]. Connor said this was not something that you pull him out of a dinner for. This deserved conversation. What were we doing; we ought to think it through. I said, "There's no time to do that. A decision has to be made tonight." I didn't want to tell him the decision was

made, but he finally got that message. He was very unhappy. I always thought he was so unhappy that if you asked him to make up a list of ten reasons why he ultimately had had enough with government, this was one of them. He said, "When is something going to be done about this?" I said I didn't know but I thought the President would probably act tomorrow.

Connor, what could he do? He was being told it was happening. It didn't create a great stir. The reason it didn't create a great stir bureaucratically was that by and large the people in the Community Relations Service were happy to be in the Justice Department, because that was where so much of the civil rights action was and they would be at the center of the action, whereas in the Commerce Department they really weren't at the center of what the Commerce Department was about. But Connor was not happy. I don't think he was unhappy in his heart about the move. If we had tried to move some of the economic, statistical stuff to Labor or something we would have had a war. I think he was just terribly unhappy at the way he was treated and the way it was handled. That done, I may have even--I guess I wouldn't have--I may have even read him that part of the memo. In any case, that done, we were set for the press conference. I guess I was enough concerned about Connor that I did tell the President I didn't think he should be at the press conference.

G: Really?

C: Yes. And [Willard] Wirtz was a winner, so he'd be happy at the press conference. Katzenbach was a winner, so he'd be happy. Of course, the Vice President was a loser, but he was a team player. The other thing was Wirtz. I can't remember when I first

talked to Wirtz but it wasn't before this day. Wirtz always being a little grumpy and what have you, even though he was getting a bonanza and something he had really lusted for for some time, didn't like the way it was handled. (Laughter) In any case, that was it. We moved and announced it the next day and I think it went pretty well. The thing that the President did was have the Attorney General and the Vice President carry on the bulk of the press conference with the President saying he approved of what the Vice President was doing. That was it.

G: Did you feel in retrospect that it was a more effective implementation of the civil rights agenda?

C: Yes, there's no question about that. What's interesting about it [is], like everything else in government, [it] was done for a whole variety of reasons, some personal and political. The substance of the move made big sense.

G: Was any other option considered, like vesting everything in Justice or creating a single component to deal with all civil rights?

C: No, I think the only issue was where we would move the contracting force, whether we'd move it into the Justice Department or give it to Labor. In a pure organizational sense you might have said if you want the boxes to look very neat, put it in the Justice Department. But the reality was that Katzenbach had so much on his plate that I didn't think that made sense. There was only so much he could do. Secondly, the unions weren't, in individual membership terms, as big for civil rights for themselves as they were for everybody else. They were great financiers--I don't demean what [George] Meany and they did. Without them there wouldn't have been a civil rights movement,

and putting the enforcement in the Labor Department did two things. It got the Labor Department, especially with a guy like Wirtz who was committed in this area, into this business so we would build a bureaucracy in the heart of Labor's department, that wanted to do this. On the other hand, it guaranteed complete AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] support for the reorganization. So that's why it ended up where it ended up.

G: Made sense politically.

(Interruption)

There were criticisms that this represented a de-emphasis of civil rights.

C: There was concern about that, but that wasn't the fact. Those criticisms, it seems to me, really faded fast.

G: At the same time, there was also criticism that moving community relations to Justice changed the tone from mediation to enforcement, that it was a stiffening, a strengthening. Did you view it as such?

C: No, and I think when we put it in Justice, we tried to cushion that a little bit. We did not view it as such. We viewed it as being in the right place. Most lawyers try and settle lawsuits, nobody wants to litigate.

G: There was also the suggestion that the old President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity had, to some extent, been more effective because it could operate outside the congressional appropriation, that it depended on funds from the department to operate, and it had a larger staff than the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Was this something you considered the--?

C: Yes, but my recollection is it was not really a serious concern. It was more a bureaucratic argument. You have to remember that some of that criticism came from the Vice President's staff or their agents or people who were friends of theirs because this came as a--Hubert Humphrey had between eight o'clock Thursday night and ten o'clock Friday morning to tell the staff that all this was happening. They were never involved in any way in the deliberations.

G: Now, some of the staff did become involved in the new structure; Wiley Branton for one.

C: Well, Wiley was very popular with the civil rights groups. What did we do? We moved him to the Justice Department?

G: Yes.

C: I even brought him in to see the President who gave him a pep talk and that was very well received, I think.

G: Anything else on the reorganization?

C: No. I can't think of anything.

G: Did you report to the President on your discussion with Humphrey?

C: Yes. I'll have to look at that. Let's see, the twenty-second, twenty-first. I don't have the twenty-third here but I am sure I--well, I reported in that memo, but I'm sure I called him and told him it was done. I don't think I waited until 1:20 a.m., when I sent him that memo. At some point Friday night I'm sure I talked to him. It would have been extraordinary for me not to have talked to him.

G: One of Humphrey's associates interpreted this whole process as sort of an empire-building operation on your part, which is in some respects kind of flattering since

you had just been at the White House, what, a month?

C: Probably--

G: I think that was Edgar Berman.

C: I've got to get his book. I got nothing out of it that we didn't have. It didn't make any difference to me where the Community Relations Service sat, and it didn't get me any more involved in civil rights than I was. I can see how they'd see that, though, because I was the guy that was bringing the message to the Vice President.

G: Was there a problem with coordination of civil rights activities, particularly with, say, compliance with Title VI?

C: Yes, there was, to an extent that--

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C: I don't think it was a significant part of the Vice President's piece of the reorganization. It was more a problem of the relationship between the Justice Department and the Department of Education. We did take the mediation education piece of the Community Relations Service and move it into HEW, into the Office of Education, because that obviously belonged in one place. But I think the reorganization was driven by the fact that it made sense on the merits but that the President wanted the Vice President out of civil rights. He wanted both the credit as well as the blame. It wasn't the only thing the President took the Vice President out of.

When I was working in the Pentagon, I remember when I was down in the army and one of my jobs was to help Adam Yarmolinsky or whoever was the--help the White House, whatever we needed, which included putting [Yoichi] Okamoto on my payroll as

general counsel of the army.

G: Transportation, airplanes and things like that.

C: Just to watch over it and make sure they got it. There was a whole army of army guys that did that. But I remember a call coming through from Kenny O'Donnell; Kenny O'Donnell said that President Kennedy did not want the Vice President [to] get any--I can't remember whether it was additional helicopter support or something--without a clearance by the White House. I was appalled. When I was a special assistant to [Robert] McNamara, I got a call one day and I also found out that President Kennedy had cut back on Johnson's mess people and what have you. When Johnson became president, I remember thinking, "Well, at least"--*vis-à-vis* Humphrey, when Humphrey was elected vice president--"having been treated like that, he's not going to be like that." I remember a call from Walter Jenkins--we had given Vice President Humphrey something, whether it was more mess boys or some army--saying that absolutely no, they wanted them jerked back and they wanted nothing for the Vice President without clearance. So the same thing. So there is something in the president-vice president relationship.

But it made sense. It was very tough. It was one of the toughest meetings I had. I hadn't been there a long time and I didn't know either the President or the Vice President very well, so it was not an easy thing.

(Interruption)

G: You want to start with the *de facto* segregation?

C: Well, on the *de facto* segregation, I was born and brought up in Brooklyn in a neighborhood in which there were some blacks, so there was no question in my mind that

there was a hell of a problem in the North. I think, though, at least until Watts, we were single-mindedly focused on the South. John Kennedy was and Lyndon Johnson was after him, because it was so egregious. After Watts we had great concerns about the North, and it wasn't just the social programs we put in. We began to think about whether we had adequate everything from maps of cities if we had to move in, if we had riots in cities. I think [John] Lindsay was worried about riots in New York City and I don't think Johnson thought very much of Lindsay anyway as being particularly adept politically to handle a situation like that.

G: Would it be fair to say that Watts caused a step up in compliance with civil rights legislation in the northern cities?

C: Well, the big compliance operation was schools, and in terms of the President, my sense and my recollections of all of that was that we were embark on a very aggressive effort to desegregate the school system. We wanted to do as much of it as we could voluntarily but we were ready to do everything, pull funds. We were going to go. He had me making periodic reports to him, tables of the schools. When he found these two Texas school districts out of compliance, he told Jacobsen to get them into compliance. Jake obviously had and then reported to me that he'd talked to the districts not submitting plans and that they told him they'll either submit plans or they'll indicate they don't want any federal funds. As I look at this memo, I remember reminding the President that while he saw two blanks in the school districts, the real problems in Texas, as they were throughout the South, were the school districts that had submitted plans but they were inadequate. There were going to have to be lengthy negotiations, and could we get the negotiations done in

time and how would we set up [inaudible] and all that stuff. The only state that went statewide in opposition in the early months was Mississippi. But I notice here we were even sending him a copy of the notice of hearing letter that was going out from [Francis] Keppel, the commissioner of education. Eventually, the desegregation effort--it's a daily status report--

G: Did you feel heat from local politicians as HEW applied pressure in the school compliance desegregation [inaudible]?

C: The greatest battle we had was with Chicago.

G: [Mayor Richard] Daley?

C: And it had its wonderfully light moments, as well as its deadly moments.

G: Really?

C: Well, HEW moved on Chicago. That was the first school district they threatened to jerk funds from. They did it on the day of the night the President went to New York to meet the Pope [Paul VI] the following day if my recollection is correct. To say that Johnson was distressed is--

(Laughter)

G: What did he say?

C: Well, we found out about it that night. Daley was coming to New York to see the Pope, too. We went through a dinner at Arthur Goldberg's which was nice, but a disaster. It was all kinds of wonderful things, little things. One, there was an issue as to where would Johnson meet the Pope. Then, there was an issue as to the dinner the night before; the Cardinal wanted to have dinner with him. It seems incredible in this day and age, but

it was still a little dicey. We had all these black issues in the South and we didn't want to add a Catholic-Baptist issue in the South. As I recall it, [Cardinal Francis] Spellman wanted to have a dinner at the Chancery and we didn't want to go to the Chancery. So we ended up at Goldberg's apartment; [it] became the neutral spot for the dinner.

I'd love to know what the entertainment was at that dinner, if there's a record of it. Goldberg had an absolute dreary pianist and opera singer, as I recall, as the two pieces of entertainment. Johnson sat in the front row, as he had to, and I'm telling you, he just squirmed and he moved. I was standing in the back of the room with Larry O'Brien. It would be interesting if he remembers this. It was so bad that we cut out. I remember we cut out--one of the gossip columnists was a great friend of his. I don't think it was Jack O'Brien; maybe it was Sidney Skolsky or somebody, would ask him--and we went and did the town. We cut out of this dinner at about ten-thirty or so and Larry and I went out and did New York. We were up 'til three or four in the morning. But Johnson--it was clearly a miserable night for him. The next morning, we got back to the Waldorf with this enormous security around the Waldorf, with notes from Marvin Watson saying we had to be at the airport at some ungodly hour, whatever.

In any case, the Pope arrives. We'd have the meeting with the Pope. The meeting with the Pope was set up in the Waldorf to put it on neutral turf and Johnson and I--maybe he had all the Catholics. He may have had Marie Fehmer and Jack Valenti with him. By this time Daley is apoplectic about the threatened cutoff. Johnson is furious with [John] Gardner. He said to me, "You get on the phone. We're going back to Washington this afternoon and when we get back we're going to meet with Gardner and

Katzenbach, Wilbur Cohen"--I don't know who else. I can't remember, but I'm sure it will be in the diary. He's talking full blast, machine gun, as we're walking down the hall to meet with the Pope about what a terrible screw up this is, what assholes these guys are, never been elected dog catcher, that whole array of expletives, walking right up and coming through that door, he's still talking.

We go in to see the Pope and, of course, we all kiss his ring. I think I even have a picture of it somewhere. Then he sits down with the Pope and the Pope says, "Mr. President, so great to meet with you. You've done so many things for poor people, to help the"--whatever--and he said, "and to help educate the children." Johnson says, "I want to educate the children. I want to help poor people, but my people won't let me." (Laughter) "We've got this fine Catholic mayor of the city of Chicago." He rolled on and on and on. The Pope had no idea. The translator's going and the Pope had no idea what he was talking about, I'm sure. The Pope was kind of looking like that. I just remember that so incredibly because it was a situation [in] which I constantly kept saying, "By God, he's gonna slap the Pope's knee with his hand or he's gonna do something, he's gonna . . ." (Laughter)

Then we came back that afternoon and met with [John] Gardner and Katzenbach, and discovered that HEW had not done something they were required to do under the law, the sixty-days notice or something. It was something that provided an avenue. Then Wilbur Cohen, who was an old Chicagoan, was sent out to try and calm the waters. It also left Johnson, while he had great respect for Gardner, and all of us with a tremendous sense that Gardner's view of how to manage HEW was not hands-on. He wasn't brought

in as a hands-on manager. He was brought in to get better people in there. Things like that can have lasting impact on people like Lyndon Johnson and the political judgment of going after the. . . . You have to remember we were dealing in a world in which on more than one occasion when we needed the Chicago delegation to a man on a vote, go pick up the phone and call Mayor Daley and we had them. So it was really an extraordinarily politically inept way to move.

G: Were you present when LBJ and Daley had that discussion in New York?

C: I say I can't remember, but I think if I had been, I would have remembered. So I probably wasn't--

G: I just wondered what the tone of their discussion was, if LBJ was wholly sympathetic with Daley?

C: If he was typically the way he was, he was probably arguing all the arguments that HEW had given him to test Daley's arguments. But I'll tell you something. There was no doubt in my mind but that there was going to be no cutoff of federal funds in the city of Chicago, that one way or another Johnson would have, if necessary, gotten Daley to work things out. We couldn't always do that. In the Democratic [National] Convention in 1968, we could not get Daley to move with the force with which we wanted him to move--not force, but with the presence--or get him to agree to let us bring in the kinds of presence we wanted to bring in in time. That I remember. And he was angry. He was talking about it all the way down on the airplane. We went right into that meeting with Katzenbach and Gardner. My hunch is he probably told Daley he'd send somebody out there and start working this thing out.

But, I'll have to go back. I think that, in part, the situation was saved because HEW did make a mistake on whatever the notice was, because I kind of remember the meeting in the Oval Office with Katzenbach saying, "Well, when did you give the sixty-day notice?" or something like that. And Gardner or Keppel or somebody saying, "What notice?" And Katzenbach saying, "Under the act," and Johnson then coming like the fires of hell on these two guys. "You don't even know the law; you don't even know this. [Inaudible] The greatest friend I have." When we get the date of that meeting--

G: Anything else on the Goldberg dinner? Did the President complain about having to endure the--?

C: He didn't have to--on the way back on the plane, yes, he was just complaining on the way back on the plane. He was really--I think if you're in politics as long as Johnson was and if you're trying to do what Johnson's trying to do and you have somebody like Daley--I can't remember how many votes the Chicago delegation had, but it was ten or fifteen, so it was 2 or 3 per cent of the House. I mean it was a nice leg up to start on anything. We're dealing with terribly controversial legislation. Many of these congressmen were not as liberal as the legislation we were putting forward was, but they were ours and there was no argument and there was no bitching and there was no bickering. You just don't go after somebody like that. So by that time he was just consumed with that.

(Interruption)

C: Wiley Branton was not just a civil rights guy. I think he was with that voter education project down there, and having him report directly to Katzenbach. Having him come over and have the meeting with the President, which we made a highly visible meeting. Then

the President--I remember this now--as part of the strategy, announcing that he wanted voter registration stepped up in the South and he wanted Wiley. I remember that meeting with Wiley telling him he wanted Wiley to go in every town in the South, and every hamlet in the South, pull Negroes out of bed and get them down there to vote. Pull them off the farms, and get them to vote and really get it revved up. [He] really sent Branton out of that office with his eyes glazed and fire in his belly. That got transmitted to the press and I've always thought that was as important as everything else. Just the fact that here's a guy telling the blacks, "The President really wants this. I want to do this. I want to do this." The President also did it to put a fire under Katzenbach, have a guy that was working for Katzenbach think he had some access to the President. He always wanted pressure from several avenues on anybody.

G: Did this create problems for the President with the southern political establishment?

C: Absolutely. But everything we did was. This, the VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America] volunteers were a serious problem with the southern--the poverty program. He tried to allay that by continuing to pump military funds into the South and by pumping these other funds into the South but it was a tough problem.

G: Did Branton himself face hostility from southern political leaders?

C: I think this operation was not done through the political establishment. To a great degree, we were very much in an adversary relationship. And when you start talking about going, in 1965, into counties and sheriffs' offices and telling them to open up the voter rolls and you've got lawsuits--there were scores of lawsuits in the Justice Department--suing everywhere, federal judges taking over the polling system to get people registered. It was

just a complete adversarial relationship until we got it done.

What's interesting, if you want to reflect on life, Johnson, as you know, thought this was the most important piece of legislation passed or near the most important. Look at the Bork nomination. It's the Voting Rights Act that defeated Robert Bork.

G: Yes, that's right. The southerners.

(Interruption)

C: [It was after] the operation that he went down to the Ranch and that's when the aluminum price increase occurred. He was really in a funk after the operation.

G: Did you have much contact with him before he went to the hospital for the operation?

C: Now, when did we have the great 89th [Congress]? Was that in 1966?

G: Yes.

C: Okay. But he went to the hospital then, too.

G: Yes.

C: Okay. What was that for?

(Interruption)

C: You have to go up to the Hill--

(Interruption)

G: Isn't this a good point to talk about the gall bladder operation and your contact with him then?

(Interruption)

G: Do you want to talk about the gall bladder operation? I wonder first of all if, perhaps, his condition affected his disposition before he had the operation, if it was bothering him?

Was this apparent in his mood?

C: No, at least not to me. I don't have any recollection about anything about the gall bladder affecting him.

G: Because this was right after he met with the Pope and--

C: No, I understand that but I'm not sure I even knew he was going in for the operation. I can't remember; I just can't remember. I guess we knew. In any case, while he was in the hospital, I remember his desire to show that he was in charge of the country. I see here that again [he'd] make sure we got bills over to him to sign, that he had announcements, visits, phone calls. I see he called me. I actually remember, [Bill] Moyers would then brief and say, "He talked to Joe Califano this morning," or he talked to somebody else. Let me see if there's by any chance--

Well, this is just civil rights. I have a recollection--you'll just have to check the records--of going out there to the hospital. This will be the tenth. I only have a couple of things in October. I have a recollection of going out to the hospital--I guess the records will show that--and seeing him doing something so there was something to report to the press. If he talked to me during this period of time with any frequency--I see only one phone call--I would think it would be, you know, we had the civil rights thing going. The Daley thing, even though it shows here sometime in the middle of the month as being deferred, we deferred Daley pretty fast. I wouldn't be surprised if he hadn't been deferred before he [Johnson] even went to the hospital, although this chronology doesn't show that. When he got out of the hospital . . . I just don't know why he calls me the night he gets back unless we're . . . I have to go 10/22 and see if . . .

G: He was there for about two weeks.

C: This must be the rent supplement program. We'd have to check, but when I look here around this time in my notes, I'm writing about the regs killing us and about [Robert] Weaver thumbing his nose at the Congress. It may well be the rent supplement program. During that time--this is just civil rights. If we get all those days, it'll show even here. I hadn't even thought about that. October . . . When did he go into the hospital? Did you say the ninth?

G: The eighth, I believe.

C: God, I left the White House at six-thirty on the ninth, that's wonderful. Senator [Alan] Bible. Oh, my God, there was a newspaper strike around this time and one of the newspaper reporters was doing a piece in *Look*; it was about me as one of the White House aides. It may have also had McPherson's picture, but it had me and it played me prominently. I see it 'cause I see the photo here. When the story came out, the President--I was not royally chewed out by Johnson with the frequency with which he chewed out Valenti and Moyers and what have you, because I was in a different category. But he chewed my ass as I had never had my ass chewed before about this story and anonymity and Roosevelt and loyalty and the press seducing you. It was just incredible. I don't know if you have that or not. Do you have the magazines for that period of time?

G: Was he consistent about that, not wanting his aides to get publicity?

C: Yes, he was consistent, but on the other hand, he wasn't unrealistic. First of all, I got a tremendous amount of publicity because I did so many briefings and when we went into full gear on the legislative program and I was briefing three or four times a week for an

hour, half an hour--he used to say, "There is only one goddamn name on that ballot and it isn't Califano." (Laughter) And he talked about Roosevelt's aides.

I think I told you he used to praise Clark Clifford and Abe Fortas. For Clifford he'd say, "There's a man you never see. He never leaks, nothing." Clifford would come over to these meetings at the White House and a week later you'd read that he'd been over there in *Time*. There's only one person that put that out; it was Clark Clifford. That used to get to me a little bit.

Once I tried to get him--this was in 1968, I think--that I had a study done. He had bought on, shortly after I went over there in August of 1965, to a memo which ordered all the domestic departments to put a planning, programming, and budgeting system in of the kind that we had in the Pentagon, which I wanted to do. I also got John Gardner to take Bill Gorham from the Pentagon. I had Gorham do a study, systems analysis. It was really the first in-depth study of who was on welfare. The statistics were stunning; it basically said that of fifteen million people on welfare, less than fifty thousand were employable males. I gave the number to the President; I tried to get him to use it. He didn't use it; he didn't want to use it. So I finally gave a speech to the press association, Sigma Delta Chi, here in Washington. We gave the speech out, and the *New York Times* called the night I was giving it and they were obviously going to make a big deal of it. Well, they made an enormous deal of it. They ran it in the left-hand column. It stunned the country. The following day it was on the front page of every paper in the country.

When I came into his bedroom the morning after the speech, I was on the CBS News--a big picture of me and these welfare numbers. And he was rip-shit. He said,

"Goddamn it." I said, "But, Mr. President, I tried"--"Why are you doing this? Why do you get this publicity?" (Laughter) I said, "Well, I kept trying to give you these numbers to put out." What amazed me about that speech was I remember John Chafee was governor of Rhode Island and I saw Chafee at some event several days later. Chafee said, how did I do it, how did I engineer all this incredible publicity. But, in any case, yes, he was not--

G: You said that he didn't tend to chew you out as he did Valenti and Moyers. Why didn't he? Why did he treat people differently?

C: Oh, I think he treated, for sure, Bill very much as a son. He thought he had educated him, and given him his opportunity, and acted with him the way a father acts with a son. I think Jack was just very close to him and Jack is a nice guy. I'm not saying I'm not a nice guy but in a way, you know, he was easy to beat up on. He was tough on Jack. There were days when he wouldn't talk to him. Four or five weeks--not weeks, but a week or ten days. You go that long and you're not talking to your appointments secretary and you're dealing on paper--he did that with all of us. He would get angry with me and he'd call my secretary. He had the hotline; he had the PL, the POTUS [President of the United States] line. He'd call my secretary to tell her to tell me to do something. But I think he chewed us all out. I don't mean to imply that anyone was immune, but not with the kind of--I'll chew a lawyer out in this office, but if it's my own son at home sometimes I get even angrier. That's the way he was with Jack, with Bill.

G: He had known McPherson a long time.

C: I think he chewed Harry out, but Harry was not as involved. Harry was not as involved in

the day-to-day frustrations and problems of running the presidency. Jack was there every day, morning through night. Bill was there, the press secretary, and before then he was a close aide with Jack, all the time. Harry was there and critical to the operation, but he was writing a speech or sending a thoughtful memo. He wasn't immersed in Watts or the coal strike or whatever, things that really got him [Johnson] like that. He was, if you will, less often around as a target of opportunity, whereas Jack and Bill were there a lot.

When I went to work for him, Cliff Carter [and I], he sent us out shortly after I went to work for him to pick up the governors and bring them to the White House. This was the first week almost. I remember Cliff Carter saying to me, "If you work for LBJ, you've got to understand one thing, and that is that you are never as good as he says you are when he praises you and you're never as bad as he says you are when he chews your ass." And it's true; it's really true. In any case, I think I came from the--no, I also came from McNamara. I had an "independent reputation," in quotes, not in a public sense but at least he hadn't made me, if you will, although he did make me. I'm just kind of looking at these--how long was he in the hospital?

G: Almost two weeks. He left on the twenty-first I believe and went to the Ranch. That's when he showed his scar.

C: The twenty-first?

G: Yes.

C: On Wednesday the twentieth I went out to--was he at Walter Reed?

G: No, Bethesda.

C: Then it was something else. I was at the Walter Reed. It doesn't show here, but I know I

went out to the hospital. You're getting me the daily diaries?

G: Right.

C: This really shows, at least on my part, tremendously heavy activity. What I obviously did was use this time to really put these legislative programs together. David Merrick and Alan DeLynn, "Hello Dolly." Have you got that on your list? Dear God.

G: That was at the White House, wasn't it?

C: No, we sent them to Vietnam.

G: Oh, you did.

C: I have Thursday, October 21 meeting with David Merrick and Alan DeLynn. Then Merrick had a fight with [Henry] Cabot Lodge, walked out on a party or something. See if you can get the stuff. Can you?

G: Sure, we can find that.

C: They went to the White House and then we asked them to go . . . That was the meeting at which I asked them to go to Vietnam.

End of Tape l of l and Interview XI

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Addendum to the Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

Joseph A. Califano

Interviewed by: Paige Mulhollan, Joe B. Frantz and Michael L. Gillette

I, Joseph A. Califano, hereby remove the restrictions on the use of the transcripts and recordings that states, "During my lifetime I retain 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 my lifetime researchers may publish 'fair use' quotations from the transcripts and tape recordings without my express consent in each case." of the sixty-three personal interviews conducted with me by Paige Mulhollan, Joe B. Frantz, and Michael L. Gillette, currently at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. (see attachment for interview details)

Joseph A. Califano Jr. — Donor

5-28-19 — Dated

Susan K. Donius

Director for Presidential Libraries

July 17, 2019 — Dated