

## INTERVIEW LXI

DATE: January 19, 1990

INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR., with comments by Marcel Bryar

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

### Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

C: As we came out of the Congress, we had the Senate bill which was basically our bill and which basically would have put the [Charles] Fahy recommendations into effect at the end of ninety days if they didn't agree. Put them into effect for a two-year period. As I understand it, the House bill had the ninety-day moratorium, but no imposed settlement at the end. At the end we go back to the drawing board again basically, and that was the last thing we wanted. And [Harley] Staggers was not about to give on that, so we went through a whole lot of indirect ways of putting heat on the conferees. I notice we had [Najeeb] Halaby call Tripp [Juan Trippe?]; we even had U.S. Steel make some calls. We tried to get guys that knew them to--

And the ambitious Democrats, like [Edward] Kennedy, even though they didn't want to vote against labor, didn't want to face this issue one more time. So we were able to hold our Senate people very well as I look at this stuff.

Then the House, they started to toy with a proposal that would give the President the power to determine whether or not the final--that if they couldn't agree by the end of

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ninety days it would be the President who would determine whether the Fahy board's recommendation would be imposed on the parties. It wouldn't be automatic from the Congress, which is what I had said at the beginning of this thing, that they're trying to dump the monkey on his back. [Senator Wayne] Morse opposed that, and some of the smaller union strikes began to get settled, I notice, as this period was continuing.

We got the Senate to reject the House proposal that the President be the guy that determined that. Then I think we got what I guess was a sort of break. The union said they would withdraw their no-strike pledge in the middle of July if the conferees didn't agree by a certain date.

G: Why did they do that?

C: I don't know, but it was their mistake I think, because I think that, as Barefoot [Sanders] noted in one of his memos in one of our meetings with the [congressional] leadership, really made Staggers' position very, very difficult. I notice as this is going on--this very weekend, the unions start to strike on midnight on July 15, and that's the weekend of the Newark riots, in which twenty-one people are killed. I must have gone--maybe it was the following weekend. It must have been August.

Then we on Sunday met with the congressional leadership, Johnson using that. And we really put the heat on these guys and issued a public statement. (Long pause) This was probably the meeting where--this was the meeting where Staggers really surprised me. Looking at Tom Johnson's notes, this is now the meeting of July 16 when the President laid out the problem, signed the executive order using the last power he had to do something about it, and said that they've got to pass the Senate bill.

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And everybody said they'd help. And then Staggers said he just didn't agree and he told Johnson, and I remember this, that he's going to be one of America's great presidents but that he didn't feel he could impose this settlement on these guys. Staggers pleaded for more time and Johnson said they just couldn't do it. You ought to see if I have anything else on this, July 16.

[Wayne] Morse was very tough, I remember that. He said some nice thing about Staggers and then he said, "Though now"--I remember that, government by law, or government by labor lobby. And Morse went back on this thing, "We are in a war and although all of you know my position on that war, I will not be a part of anything which weakens the morale of our men over there. We must live up to what I consider to be a matter of trust." [Mike] Mansfield said that they'd lay aside everything else, and Johnson put it, "How long does the President have to wait on Congress, or how long does Congress have to wait on Mr. [P. L. Roy] Siemiller?" I think even [Ralph] Yarborough indicated in that meeting that he was ready to vote with us.

(Interruption)

And in the course of this, we laid everything we could on the House. And I notice--and we laid everything we could public. I notice I'm quoted here; I'm sure he told me to go out there. [Robert] McNamara's quoted.

G: Were there any trades that you recall?

C: No. It was just pure heat. I'm sure I talked to the [*New York Times*] editorial people, the [*Washington Post*]. It was a full-court press.

G: Patriotism and--

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C: Well, this was crazy. It was just crazy for Staggers to continue to block this up. And we started to get some liberals with us. [Morris] Mo Udall when Irv Sprague talks to him, says, "If it's close, I'll go with you. I'd rather not." We began to have a sense that we could . . .

And the Chicago delegation which had gone the other way and voted--the Illinois delegation swung to us.

G: Is that Mayor [Richard] Daley?

C: That was Daley and--

(Long pause) Then I guess we announced immediately the board. Do you have that chronology? You've got my chronology there. Let me just take that.

B: July 18?

C: Yes, but I think the night of the seventeenth--

G: Yes, it must have been the seventeenth.

C: He got on the phone immediately. But what I can't really remember is--I guess there are no papers, but I know Morse, [George] Meany, [Frederick] Kappel, [Ted] Kheel, and [Leverett] Saltonstall we talked to. I just have no recollection of it.

G: Here's another . . .

C: Yes. We called these guys, and the President then named the board. Came out of the press room and--

G: Why did he pick Morse?

C: Well, I don't know. This goes to this whole question of whether he wanted to--he liked Morse; that wasn't inconsistent with a desire to let him hang out and dry. But the labor people--and he was so annoyed with Siemiller I'm sure he knew Siemiller would--as

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Siemiller is quoted here saying, "Morse is *persona non grata* for strong support of the law that broke the strike." But I think he also knew Morse would close it down, that he wasn't going to have to deal with this problem again. Morse would take care of it for him.

G: But that this might take care of Morse as well.

C: That it might take care of--that's my speculation. I don't--

It's interesting. Here Barefoot is speculating that one of the reasons [John] Dingell, for example, voted against our Rat Extermination Bill rule was because he was angry with the Railway Labor Bill. I don't know whether that's so or not.

I notice the *Times* here reports that [Secretary of Labor Willard] Wirtz did not want Morse named to the board, that he wasn't on Wirtz' list. I don't know whether that's true or not. I'm surprised there are no lists of people in these papers. I don't--

G: To select from, you mean?

C: Yes. We were ready to go. I know--

B: Do you want a list of board members? The second page is a list that's from your chron [chronological] file.

C: There's no memo in my chron file to the President sending him a list of members. That's after the-- And Morse did get a unanimous report, I guess, on that.

Unbelievable, these goddamned editorial writers.

G: What's unbelievable?

C: No, I mean the *Times* saying that--Johnson warning about inflation and then they say, "The President's warnings about inflation make particularly curious reading in light of a glowing White House endorsement of the rail wager award." It's funny. It's so out of the real world.

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That's it.

G: Okay.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview LXI

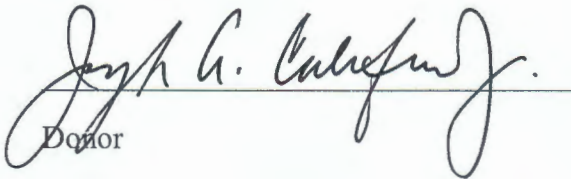
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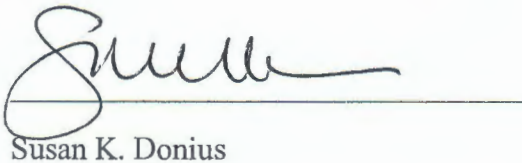
Joseph A. Califano

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

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