INTERVIEWEE: ANTHONY CELEBREZZE

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE MULHOLLAN

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M: You are Judge Anthony Celebrezze, and your connection with the Johnson administration was as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, which you had actually undertaken in 1962 under President Kennedy. Prior to that you had served for nine years as the mayor of the city of Cleveland (five terms) and you became a federal judge in 1965 and you are still serving in that capacity.

C: Prior to being mayor, I was state senator for two terms.

M: Right. Did you know Mr. Johnson at all in the period before you went to Washington?

C: I knew him only to the extent as a big city mayor and as president of the United States Conference of Mayors and as president of the Municipal League. We would have conferences with him as the Senate leader, dealing with problems affecting the states. I had no personal contact with him. The only personal contact I had with him was in 1960 when he was running for Vice President. He came to Cleveland and I met him at the airport and arranged a press conference for him. That was my only contact with him.

M: What did these big city northern mayors think about Johnson being the vice presidential candidate in 1960?

C: I personally thought it was a very good choice, I was a delegate to the convention in Los Angeles, for two reasons. One was of course the great issue that was involved in the Kennedy campaign, the religious

issue. And the other was that Kennedy, coming from the northern part of the country, Massachusetts, would look for a running mate--who was from the South--not the deep South but from the southern [area]. Not only that, I think it was a wise choice on the part of Kennedy, though there was some disagreement among the Kennedy people themselves as to the choice. It was a wise choice because Kennedy wanted to move in so many directions in the domestic front and as Vice President, Johnson, who had been majority leader in the Senate, was personally familiar with the senators. That would be a great aid in passing legislation.

M: The combination didn't cause you difficulty with your other delegates and the Ohio Democrats?

C: You mean Johnson's?

M: Yes.

C: No, we accepted Johnson.

M: When you went to Washington then for President Kennedy, were there any particular areas of HEW activity where the Vice President had particular responsibility, namely Johnson?

C: No, not as Vice President. The only responsibilities or my contact with the Vice President outside of cabinet meetings was that he was chairman [of the commission] of the Equal Opportunity Employment Act and I was a member of that and we worked closely on that program.

M: Could you tell anything about his action on that commission about what he would later do in civil rights, for example?

C: Yes, indeed. He was very adamant about equal employment opportunities for all individuals, as a matter of fact, particularly as it applied to the black people. At every meeting he was rather adamant that these individuals or groups or citizens be given equal opportunity. Of course that was

right in line with my basic philosophy of all my life. He worked hard on the Civil Rights Act. Actually the Civil Rights Act was introduced under Kennedy.

The Civil Rights Act came about in a rather peculiar way, I think. While Kennedy was always thinking of introducing civil rights legislation I think personally I may have brought it to a head at a cabinet meeting. All my education programs, and all my health programs, and aid programs were being held up in Congress by individuals who wanted to know how this would affect the civil rights of people. So in a cabinet meeting one day I just spoke up and said that particularly in the field of education, that I was unable to get any legislation programs through Congress. I thought it was not right to put the whole burden of civil rights in the area of education, and thought that if we could speed up the introduction of the civil rights program that I then could truthfully say to the senators, "That matter is covered under the Civil Rights Act." And shortly thereafter the Civil Rights Bill was introduced.

M: So Mr. Johnson's later record in connection with that was no surprise to you?

C: No, as a matter of fact Johnson was very strong for it. I think that's true of most people who have become converted. When they become converted they go all-out and that's what President Johnson did. [laughter]

M: Where it's religion, or civil rights, or whatever!

C: That's right. And he was dedicated to the cause of equal rights for all people.

M: The second thing on the question that the office sent on the problems of HEW, I have noticed that's in the news again. I believe even your predecessor Mr. Ribicoff said it should be dismembered when he left the

position, or something?

C: Yes, Abe Ribicoff felt the department was too big, and I was in complete disagreement with him. I didn't think, and I still don't think, that the department's too large to manage, even in the face of my tenure of office when the responsibilities of the department expanded rapidly as Congress vested in us certain administrative duties and also the massive amount of legislation that was being passed. But you must remember that what was going on in the department was the government's growing response to these dramatic and social unheavals that were going on in the country. It certainly posed some serious challenges to the health, education and welfare, not only in the Department of HEW but on all levels of government. We were going through a period of rapid industrialization, we were in a period of a technological revolution, which certainly transformed the economic, and cultural, and social life of a nation as occupation needs shifted from the unskilled to the skilled. And of course people continued to move from the rural areas into the urban areas. So that we were faced at that time with really expanding many of these programs, but the department, in my opinion was manageable. I had no difficulty managing the Department of HEW while I was secretary. I was fortunate in that I was surrounded by some very capable people, and--

M: Were they mostly your people or did you find them there?

C: No. A few came in after I came, but I found most of them there because they were under Ribicoff. They were the original appointees, the surgeon general, the commissioner of education, and things of that nature, Bill Keppel came in as commissioner of education after I became secretary. But I think the main thing in operating a department of that size is to have constant liaison between yourself and your department heads. We used

to have two, three, sessions a week with the department heads. So that I was always kept informed. I must admit that that's not the way to become a glamour boy. It's just hard work from morning until night, and you don't run around the country making speeches. You pay attention to your work. But the department worked well, we had wonderful relationships with Congress, because congressmen could always reach me with their basic problems. I don't think it's too large to control, personally.

M: How did it relate to the White House, both in Mr. Kennedy's time and Mr. Johnson's time--

C: Both President Johnson and President Kennedy had a staff member at the White House who was responsible. He was a liaison between the President and the cabinet members. That was true of all departments. I would work with staff members, but at no time if I ever wanted to see the President, was I denied seeing the President.

M: That's important. The staff, you don't think, kept you--you know, in Mr. Nixon's time there have been charges that the staff prevented cabinet members from seeing--

C: No. I could see the President whenever I wanted to; however, I had been a large city mayor and held a chief executive job and I had a cabinet of nine members also as mayor, and one of the things I tried to impress upon my cabinet was that they had certain responsibilities and I didn't want them running in to me every other time they had to make a decision. That if I had to make a decision for them, I wouldn't need them. And because of that background unless it was a matter of critical nature, I just went ahead and did what I thought was right, and I always figured, well, if it was the wrong thing, I'd hear about it, but I never--

M: Did you?

C: No, I was rather fortunate. My programs proceeded. If there was a question and I was in doubt, or if the White House, through staff position papers wanted to go in a different field or different area, why we would sit down and discuss it, and I'd present my views and we'd come to a conclusion, and then go ahead with it.

M: Who was the staff liaison man?

C: Well, I had--

M: Doug Cater, for awhile?

C: Cater was staff man under Johnson, too, then there was Ramsey Clark, and before that, was Mike Feldman, and Mr. White, and of course Sorenson, and then, Bill Moyers.

M: Did the White House staff operations change much from President Kennedy to President Johnson?

C: Not too much, same procedure was pretty well followed under both administrations.

M: When there was a program that the President wanted to present as part of the administration's program, take for example the poverty program, did the departments such as yours concerned get adequate chance to work out what it thought was the proper program, or did the staff do it?

C: No. Let's take the poverty program. My department, in working closely with the staff, would then come up with position papers, and from these position papers we would then draft legislation.

M: The department drafted the legislation?

C: The department, together with the White House, most of the time the department drafted the legislation, then we would introduce it.

M: So there wasn't any question of them going around your authority, or undermining your authority?

C: No, no one ever went around the authority of Anthony Celebrezze, or they heard about it. I think because of my background, I knew how to work with people, I knew how to work with Congress, I knew how to work with staff people because I'd had this basic administrative experience. And as I say, perhaps that's why I think the department is not unmanageable, because no one tried to go behind my back, or no one tried to, if I may use the expression, "jam anything down my throat." If I didn't think it was right we went directly to the President with it. And of course when the President then made a decision, that was it. Even though I wasn't wholeheartedly for it, "If that's what you want, Mr. President, that's what we'll do." And as a matter of fact when President Johnson would call me on any specific thing I used to tell him the same thing I used to tell President Kennedy. I'd say, "Can do, if you'll let me handle it." And I have an autographed picture from President Johnson which he autographed to "Tony Celebreeze, the Can-Do Secretary."

M: That's a high compliment actually, that's what you're there for.

C: Yes. Well, when I left the cabinet he presented me with a silver platter in which he said, "To Tony Celebreeze, colleague and miracle legislative worker."

Of course I had high respect for both Kennedy and Johnson, and I also had a job that I had to do, and I was familiar with most of the complex problems because I had bean faced with them as mayor of Cleveland.

M: The slogan of Mr. Johnson, early years, was, "Let Us Continue." Could you tell from the standpoint of being secretary of a very large department that there was a decided change in operations between the two presidents, or was it really more or less a smooth continuation?

C: I didn't notice any change, and I think that's because Johnson had been

given certain powers as Vice President in working with departments, so the transition was very smooth. Most of the legislation, most of the position papers and the great domestic programs were drafted under the Kennedy administration. And most of the legislation that was passed, was either conceived or thought of under the Kennedy administration. Johnson just picked them up from that point and dressed them up a little and made them more palatable for the Congress to accept. He passed them under his administration.

M: How soon after President Kennedy's assassination did Mr. Johnson call you in to give you an idea of what he expected and what he intended to do?

C: Well, first, there was a cabinet meeting involved, and we got appointed. Then I went down to the ranch and we went all through the HEW program, particularly the budget, with him. He was pleased with what we were doing. But Johnson was not a patient man. I think his personality is such that he's always in a hurry. He wants to get to the end in a hurry, and sometimes, of course, you can't do that, working with Congress. I think he should have known that better than anyone else as majority leader. But the transition was very smooth, very smooth. We had more cabinet meetings under Johnson than we had under Kennedy, many more cabinet meetings.

M: Do things really get decided at cabinet meetings?

C: No. The only purpose of cabinet meetings is so that each cabinet member has a general idea of what the other departments are doing, that's the only purpose of that. I think also the other purpose it serves, if you're on the platform, the speaking platform, and questions are asked that at least you know a little about what the defense department is doing and what the state department is doing, but very few matters are decided at

cabinet level. Kennedy worked more with the individual. If he wanted something out of HEW to go one way he would call you, and you would go down and sit down with him, and discuss it as a cabinet member. And I think that's a good procedure because there were many days when a particular cabinet member was so involved in some important work he would have to interrupt that work and come to a cabinet meeting, sit there for two hours listening to the woes of the Secretary of HEW or the Secretary of Agriculture, in which he was not interested. So that the only purpose that it served was 1) you got to know the other cabinet members well; and 2) you had a general idea what the overall policy was and all problems facing the nation.

M: Was Mr. Johnson a different man--you said he was not a patient man--was he different down at the ranch when he was in Washington?

C: I think he was more relaxed at the ranch than he was in Washington. I remember walking up the road with him when I was there. I think it was about 6:30 in the morning and the day before I think he had had a barbecue of some kind. And here was the President of the United States out there picking up paper cups that somebody had left behind. [laughter] I kind of remarked on that, called it to his attention.

M: Your major legislation in that first year, I guess, was the poverty program, would it be?

C: No, I had--actually passed about thirty-eight bills while I was secretary.

M: Well, now, I mean in 1964.

C: In 1964. Well, we had the poverty bill which was important and of course in the meantime we were still working hard on medicare and we were still trying to break the barrier in secondary and primary education because of the religious question.

M: Those both passed in '65.

C: Yes, they passed before I left.

M: Yes, right.

C: Most all of the legislation that passed in the year '65 (I left in August of '65) was legislation that I had already prepared and testified on.

M: Why don't we just go through particularly those three, start with the major poverty bills and describe the role of the department and yourself, I'll interrupt when a question arises.

C: Well, the poverty program was a joint effort I think of all the departments, Department of Labor, Department of HEW. Each department had its own position on the areas they were vitally interested in. In the poverty program I was interested primarily from the educational point of view and from the welfare and health point of view. Many long hearings were held. We tried to establish agencies, such as VISTA, and the Office of Economic Opportunity. All dealt with the question of poverty. We had originally set the poverty level at $2,000. Later it was raised to $3,000. The basic reason was that if we went much higher, we'd get into financial difficulties. You'd be surprised the difference between two, three, and four thousand dollars made.

When we say the poverty program, our basic philosophy, and certainly President Johnson's basic philosophy, was to just not give handouts. Our goal was to retrain these people until they were able to take their place in the mainstream of the economic life of the country. Well, we found basically, no matter in which direction we went, we always ended up with the problems of education. We had to educate them, we had to retrain them, and while we had many good programs, the Higher Education Act of 1963

and the amendments of '65 we were doing pretty well in higher education. But we weren't doing a thing for primary and secondary education.

As a matter of fact I introduced the bill on primary and secondary education the first year I was there under President Kennedy. We didn't get anywhere with it. The second year President Kennedy thought we shouldn't even introduce it because we had no possibility of getting around this constitutional question. But we introduced it anyway, and finally got it passed. I think the greatest breakthrough was the passing of the secondary and primary education bill. Of course the other great piece of legislation which had been pending for twenty years and no one could get it through Congress which was medicare. They were both passed.

M: It has been charged that Mr. Johnson wanted to get this poverty program passed so quickly in 1964 because it was sort of the first piece of legislation that was distinctly his as compared to President Kennedy. Do you think that's accurate? That it was Mr. Johnson's primarily, rather than President Kennedy's?

C: Yes. I think there were certain basic changes that were made in it. I always disagreed with the title of it, the poverty program. I thought we should have called it something else. I don't think Johnson was in a hurry to get it through because it was his, I think President Johnson was in a hurry to get it through because the needs were there. Things had to be done and we had to be in a hurry. And I think in all of these programs that Johnson was involved with on the domestic front we were building up to almost a crisis and we had to act and act immediately on them. That's why he was in a hurry for them. I certainly agreed on that point.

M: You were listed at the time as being opposed to creating separate agencies under Mr. Shriver. Is that accurate?

C: No. Exactly the opposite. I did not want the poverty program. They wanted originally to put it in HEW and I didn't want it. I said I would take if if it was forced on me but I had so many programs and I knew at the time that I just couldn't handle any more. I thought if you want to really give this the impetus that was necessary, then put it in the commission or agency of its own and let them go with it. That's how Sarge Shriver got it. I know at the time that the newspaper articles were saying that I was bucking Mr. Shriver for it. The fact was exactly opposite. I didn't want it!

M: That's the kind of thing oral history is supposed to clear up. You did use the resources of your department in helping to get it passed?

C: Oh, yes. We testified. As a matter of fact we used the resources of our department because many of the things that the poverty program were interested in tied in with my department. The health, the education, and we merely coordinate it, and worked with Sarge Shriver on it. I had no difficulty with Sarge Shriver; I thought he was a man of great ability, and we worked well together. But I just didn't want the responsibility for the total program because the program also touched the labor department and touched other departments. It touched the Department of Agriculture in their rural programs. And I thought it was best to give one man the responsibility to push it so that each could coordinate with what the other departments were doing.

M: Part of that that occasioned most opposition both at the time and in operation, I guess, is the community action program part. Where did that come from?

C: Well, I had some doubts about it. I was for it, but most of the opposition came from the private agencies. They were fearful that the federal government setting up these action programs would duplicate programs of private agencies, such as the Red Cross, the YMCA, church groups, and others. Basically my thought was to strengthen the private agencies rather than start our own agencies. I didn't get too far with it.

M: Mr. Johnson, of course, had the reputation then of being the great manipulator of the legislature. What personal role did he play in pushing this through that you could see from where you were?

C: Well, let me relate to you how it works first. The legislation is introduced after clearance from the White House, and then we tried to get congressional hearings. And while the President wouldn't call you, Jack Valenti would always be on the phone, saying, "How are you doing with this legislation?" And, "The President's interested in its moving along. Are you having any difficulty?" Well, if I was having difficulty I would merely tell Jack Valenti and Jack would convey it, I presume, to the President. He'd get on the line himself and get some of the congressmen or senators to go along with it. And he kept tabs. He knew exactly at what position all the bills were. Then when it would come up on the floor for a hearing, I would call Jack and say, "That thing is coming up for a vote on the Senate floor. Our nose count shows that we will win by two votes, or three votes." I was never more than one vote off in my nose count.

M: Very good record!

C: Well, that's very important. If your nose count is such that you think you're going to be defeated then you're better off trying to stall the legislation, giving yourself more time to work with the congressmen. And number two, is that it's always embarrassing to the President to have legislation voted down. It's better if you don't get it voted on.

I'll never forget the vote on medicare. I was sitting in my office one day, and as you know President Johnson was extremely interested in medicare. A call came from Senator Mike Mansfield, the majority leader in the Senate, saying that one of the senators had introduced an amendment to the Medicare Bill, which he thought would cripple it so badly that we could never get enough money to cover that particular phase of it. And he asked if I wouldn't come down and discuss it with some of the other senators. So I went down to Mike Mansfield's office, and took Wilbur Cohen with me. Wilbur Cohen was then my legislative liaison man. When we arrived Mike Mansfield was there, Senator Douglas, Senator Smathers of Florida, as I recall, and a few other senators. I was advised that the amendment would pass on the Senate floor. There was no way of defeating it. The only question was whether we wanted a roll call or not. Senator Mansfield thought it was best not to get a roll call, because if you're defeated bad on a roll call when the bill goes to conference, your chances of getting it in a conference are practically nil because of the vote. And so we all agreed that we would not have a roll call on the amendment to the bill.

They went back out on the Senate floor and Wilbur Cohen went with them. I sat in Mike Mansfield's office--and

about ten minutes later Mr. Cohen came running in saying, "I don't know what happened, but they asked for a roll call." And he said, "What do I do now, Mr. Secretary?" Wilbur was of the Jewish faith, and I said, "I don't know what you're going to do, Wilbur, but I'm going over in a corner and say a prayer to Saint Jude!" You know, Saint Jude is the patron saint of lost causes. [laughter]

So we went out, Wilbur Cohen went back out, and ten minutes later he came back in and he says, "Mr. Secretary, I don't know what happened, but the amendment was defeated by two votes!" [laughter]

M: St. Jude came through!

C: So I said, "Well, chalk one up for St. Jude." And Wilbur Cohen said, "Yes. And you almost made a Christian out of me!" [laughter]

M: Do you think the President really changes votes when he calls individuals and asks them for their vote?

C: No doubt, no doubt.

M: Really?

C: And to understand it you have to understand human nature. The President is a very powerful individual, who has a great many appointments, and congressmen and senators have to get elected. And they can only maintain a fairly decent organization through patronage. If it's something that is basically against their own thinking, they won't go along with it. But if they're on the edge and you can swing one way or another, a call from the President will swing always in favor of it.

M: So that's more than just a kind of cosmetic operation. It really does produce results.

C: It does. Well, like any individual, whether you're a senator or a cabinet member or a congressman, it's just something when that phone rings

and it's the President of the United States calling.

M: You want to agree even if you're inclined not to. What about the Education Act? You said the constitutional question stalled that for so very long, how did that log-jam get broken?

C: Well, we had to have many, many meetings on the question of aid to primary and secondary education. And the major stumbling block, of course, was the First Amendment of the Constitution, separation of church and state. Though I think we were reading that provision much broader than the drafters of the amendment ever thought. So I started having a series of meetings with the respective groups, the Baptists, who were opposed to it, and certain members of the Jewish faith, and of course the Catholics. I had made a horrible mistake the first time, getting them all in together at one meeting. And I got absolutely nowhere. I also read every state constitution and the federal constitution to find a way that I thought would not be unconstitutional by giving aid to private schools. And finally the second time around, I didn't call the groups in all together, I called them in individually. And my basic argument was that if it was constitutionally permissible for a student to go to a public library while he's attending the parochial or private school, draw books and other material from the public library and take it back with him to his classroom for his use, then why wouldn't it be constitutionally permissible to bring the books and other items to the school, rather than have the student go to the library?

With this thought in mind, we drafted the legislation bill, and finally I presented it in this manner they agreed to it. What I was trying to do was help the student. The question of busing for example. The example that if two young people are standing on the same street corner

and are going to school in the same area, the bus would pick up the public school boy but leave the private school boy standing there. And of course the argument was, that's cor ect, because the bus is being subsidized by taxpayers' money, and therefore you're using public money to take the student to school. Well, I told the group, "I'll agree with you on that point, if you'll agree with me on this point." I go to New York quite frequently and I take the subway that goes to St. Patrick's Church to attend mass. Now the subway is subsidized by public money. Is that unconstitutional?

Of course they said, "No." Well it was on that theory that we finally got the primary-secondary education bill passed.

M: Did you get all the church groups to agree to that?

C: All of them supported it except one of the Jewish groups.

M: Did you have to give up a lot to get the final version through, a lot of compromises in the House and Senate?

C: There weren't too many changes in the bill. Of course, it seems like I testified forever before committees.

M: How much of a burden is that on the time of the cabinet officer?

C: Tremendous. Fifty percent of your time is spent on the Hill.

M: Just testifying before various committees?

C: Testifying and talking with senators and congressmen. Though I must say--oh, I guess I was there three years and three weeks, which was longer than the other secretaries lasted--that members of Congress from both the House and the Senate were always very polite to me. I think I had established a reputation with them that I talked straight, I wouldn't try

to mislead them in any way and while they asked critical questions which they should ask there was never any personality involved in it. And for that I was grateful.

For example, on the Medicare Bill, I started my testimony at 10 o'clock in the morning and finished at 6 o'clock at night. We took half an hour for lunch, just kept going.

M: Do the congressmen, in cases like that, seem to really be informed as to the issues involved and so on, or is it pretty much window dressing--

C: No. The congressmen are informed because they have staff members who prepare it for them, and also prepare in many cases, not in all cases, but in many cases, their list of questions for them. I had difficulty--my greatest difficulty before the congressional committees was that of the race problem, before we introduced the civil rights act.

M: Did the civil rights act come up to Congress from HEW?

C: No. It came from the White House, but we all testified on it. I appeared before it on it and we had a provision that might have been interpreted to use public money for busing. I think it was Representative Kramer from Florida who finally put in a bill that you couldn't use any of these funds for that purpose. But it was something that had to come, it was needed. If we're going to remain one nation it just always seemed to me so inhuman to tell an individual, because of his color, he couldn't eat in a restaurant, he couldn't stay in a motel, or he couldn't do this or that. That's just plain ridiculous as far as I was concerned. Or that you couldn't go to a certain school, that's plain ridiculous too. It was something that was badly needed in this country and while it caused some problems eventually, history will tell us that it was the most important

piece of legislation passed by the Congress.

M: The Education Act--did Mr. Johnson take a personal hand in that one, too, like he did on the poverty?

C: Yes, yes. Most of the legislation. I think I had something like thirty-six or thirty-seven bills introduced while I was secretary and passed most of them. And the President took part in most of them.

M: He willingly used his time for that?

C: You could always call upon President Johnson as far as I was concerned. President Kennedy and President Johnson were always very cooperative with me on legislative matters.

M: What about the medicare thing, that one took longer and perhaps is more important than many--did that come out of your department?

C: Yes, medicare was strictly HEW legislation. The first medicare bill was up, I think, about two months after I became secretary in 1962. I then had staff meetings on it. Our greatest opposition was from the American Medical Association, as you recall. At that time the President of the AMA was going around the country making all kinds of speeches in opposition to medicare. And I called a staff meeting and told them that I didn't want anyone going around making speeches for medicare. I was convinced if we gave these individuals enough rope they'd hang themselves, which they did. They got so many people mad at them. Wilbur Mills, of course, was a key to it. Finally Wilbur Mills came along.

M: He was opposed to it?

C: He was opposed to it; Senator Hill from Alabama wasn't too keen for it until he came close to being defeated that year. I don't know whether it's true or not, but they contended the AMA had opposed him, so he came along. But even without that the basic need was there. Medicare, as far

as my testimony was concerned--I went in the first year and testified on medicare, helping the aged in this country meet their medical costs. I got nowhere. My approach the second year was entirely different. My approach was, this bill helps the young people of America, because it is possible for two young people to have aged parents. And if they have to make a choice between buying a house, or educating children, and taking care of Ma's or Pa's hospital bill, they're going to pay the hospital bill. And it was on that basis that medicare, I think, was passed in the Senate of the United States.

M: That's interesting because you think of it as being aid to the elderly.

C: But basically it helped the young folks out because they just couldn't handle this. And it only seemed to make sense that during your productive years you paid into social security and at least a part of that took care of your medical expenses when you most needed it. And you most need it when you're aged. I think it has to be expanded, but the philosophy was to get the minimum type legislation passed, let's get something started and then you can keep adding to it as you go along.

M: Of course that's what the opponents claimed, that this--

C: The "Foot-In-the-Door-Theory."

M: Foot-in-the-door.

C: Well, the opponents primary claim was that we were heading towards socialized medicine. Now I was not for socialized medicine. This medicare program isn't anywhere near the English system, but it seems to me that if we ever went to socialized medicine the people in the profession themselves would lead us to that by high costs. Only time will tell.

M: Of course I don't think so far it's hurt their incomes drastically to participate in medicare.

C: No, at least they are sure of being paid for their services. It is true that their primary defense, as I understand it, was, "We're a professional group and we'll take care of--there are many people we render services without charge and we think that's sufficient." Well, it wasn't sufficient. It just wasn't. And I think again in Johnson's philosophy and certainly my philosophy was to give an individual dignity, and there's more dignity when you can pay for the services, than when you can't pay it and have to rely upon charity.

M: When you have the right to them because you contributed in advance. What changed Wilbur Mills? Do you know?

C: I don't know, and I didn't attempt to find out. I was just happy about it.

M: You don't know whether Mr. Johnson played a direct role.

C: I don't know.

M: Because I know that Wilbur Mills is from an absolutely safe district in central Arkansas.

C: I don't know, but I must say this. I perhaps appeared before Wilbur Mills' committee more than any other committee, and he was a well-informed individual, very attentive, knew what he was talking about all the time. Had his figures right, but he was fair. And that's all you can ask. He would hear you out, and after all it's his prerogative as a congressman to--. Let's get back to the Education Bill. We had gone in on the Education Bill on a piece-meal basis. We would introduce twenty bills in education, and got absolutely nowhere. So finally I called a staff meeting together and said, "Now we're not going in on separate bills. We're going to take this omnibus theory. We're going to draft a bill with twenty-four parts, lump them all together." Well, the theory was, "You'll never get it through Congress." I said, "Well, that's my responsibility."

So we lumped it all together, twenty-four parts of that bill, and spent many hours testifying on it, and the question always, "Why did you lump this together?"

Well, I said, "We finally determined that these are the major basic needs in all these areas of education and we wanted to call it to the attention of Congress. Now Congress can take this bill and they can chop it up into twenty separate pieces of legislation. If that's what you want to do, that's your prerogative. But we just feel that we had to bring all these problems, and they're all related to one another, in one bill." Well, by the time I left, I think about eighteen parts of that bill had been passed, and eventually all of it was passed, through the omnibus approach to it.

M: Right. It's interesting that they'd take them that way when they might not ever have gotten their attention single, because they wouldn't ever have gotten to the stage of hearing.

C: Well, you had a basic advantage in this case. If you introduced twenty separate pieces of legislation, or twenty-four, you had to have twenty-four hearings. In this you had everything all at once. This is it, and of course it took you much longer to testify, and it was more difficult, but you presented it all at one time. And then Congress could do with it as they pleased. But once you show how each related to the others, all of them were interrelated to one another, you could see the soundness of introducing one bill.

M: Was that the bill, the primary and secondary bill, the bill that Mr. Johnson insisted the Senate pass exactly as the House had passed it without any further amendments to make sure it would then get through the House--

C: Yes, I think that's true. The bill was passed one week before I left office. As a matter of fact, I think that and medicare were the last two bills that were passed before I left office.

M: That was a good send-off for a retiring cabinet member.

C: It certainly was.

M: Particularly one that you had worked on for three years, more or less, to get them to go through. Mr. Johnson had a lot of task force operations that he ran all the time on planning for future legislation. Were those run separately from the departments, or did you participate in that activity?

C: I didn't personally participate, but the staff would participate in what we called position papers.

M: So they weren't comprised to get around the departments?

C: No. In other words if it dealt with education, I would assign Frank Keppel who was commissioner of education to work with the task force on it. If it was public health I would assign the surgeon general to it. If it was food and drug I would assign the commissioner of food and drug to it. It was just completely impossible for the secretary to personally attend all of these. I think what the public doesn't understand was that besides being secretary of HEW dealing with the problems, the secretary was also the chairman of the Federal Radiation Council that dealt with radiation. He was also chairman of Inter-Departmental Committee on Children and Youth, which tied in with other departments. He was chairman of the President's Council on Aging. He was chairman of the President's Council on Youth Fitness. He was a member of the Board of Governors of the American Red Cross. He was a member of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. He was a member of the Area

Development Advisory Policy Board. He was a member of the Board of Trustees for the Social Security Trust Fund. He's a member of the Board of Trustees for the Natural Cultural Center. He's a member of the Civil Defense and Mobilization Board. He's a member of the President's Committee on the Employment of Physically Handicapped. He's a member of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency. He's also a member of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor. He's a member of the Recreation Advisory Council. Now these also took a great deal of time.

M: Besides testifying 50 percent of your time, as you've already said.

C: So, well, in many of these instances while you were in those areas where you were the member, you generally assigned some staff individual to attend the meetings for you. I personally was quite active as chairman of the Radiation Council, because I would see what was coming on it. And, of course, it was a very complicated field at that time. Besides attending these committee meetings, testifying, working on position papers, and running a department, I stayed pretty well occupied.

M: You mentioned all those committees. Did something like the President's Committee on Aging, for example--does the President himself play much of a part in committees of that kind? Or are they sort of just advisory bodies--

C: They're advisory. The President doesn't attend meetings. What we did was after we had prepared our program then we would submit it to the President for his study. He never physically attended meetings.

M: They didn't bring you into contact with the President?

C: Well, for example, in the Office of Aging. When I became secretary there were only two people involved in the Office of Aging, two people from the secretary's staff on it. In studying the structure of the

department I made many changes in the department after I became secretary. I decided that the problems of the aging were very broad problems, and were going to become very critical problems, and certainly you can't have two staff members of the secretary's office handle it. So I established a division in the department and named a head to the Office of Aging.

M: Comparable to the Office of Education?

C: No, not comparable to the Office of Education, comparable to the rehabilitation--wasn't quite as large as welfare, but I gave it an identity which it didn't have before. Then of course I created the Department of Welfare Administration. Took it completely out of Social Security. It used to be under Social Security, but there again I was planning for the future. Commissioner Ball was doing a magnificent job, but he just couldn't devote all his time to these welfare problems, and with the foreseen coming of medicare he was going to be tremendously busy with that. So I took that out and brought in Ellen Winston from North Carolina who was head of the state office of aging in North Carolina. I brought her in as welfare administrator, and then also tied her in with the Office of Aging.

M: Did the Johnson White House encourage bringing women in at positions at that high level?

C: Yes.

M: More than Kennedy or the same as?

C: No, I think about the same. There again, that was pretty much left at the discretion of the secretary, on staff positions. Of course under the reorganization the welfare administrator did not have to be nominated by the President. The other departments, like office of secretary, surgeon general, they have to be nominated by the President and confirmed by the

Senate. These others that I created were direct appointments by the secretary. They didn't have to be confirmed by the Senate or appointed by the President.

M: And the White House didn't interfere as to your right--

C: No. You would submit your program to the White House as to what you were going to do so they knew what you were doing, and then you went ahead and did it.

M: One of your chief subordinates who was a presidential appointee got, oh, a lot of notoriety for one reason or another. Did you have to defend him against the President? The surgeon general got into a lot of publicity while he was there on smoking. Did that get into White House involvement at all?

C: No. As a matter of fact when the first day I was secretary, I was hit with the thalidomide problem.

M: Yes, that's even a bigger one, I'm sure.

C: And then, of course, we had the birth control report that had not quite been completed, but was completed while I was there. I didn't even consult the White House on it. The question was should I release it or not. It had always been my philosophy when you appoint a commission to make a report it becomes a public report, you can't sit on it. But of course, certain columnists again without even consulting me or talking to me--I don't mind being criticized if at least they'd show me the courtesy of coming in, and listening, and discussing something.

M: They don't even do that much?

C: Well, I'd pick up the paper and they were betting I would not issue the birth control report because I was Catholic. Well, that was ridiculous!

I issued the report. Then we had the smoking report, which was also a critical report because it affected a big industry, you know. But my philosophy was we've analyzed this, we've come to this conclusion, we'll release the report, then we'll introduce legislation. We didn't quite get as strong a warning as we wanted, but at least we broke the barrier and got something through on it.

M: Did the President help with that?

C: Oh, yes.

M: He's a reformed smoker himself, I guess, after his heart attack.

C: Actually, being realistic, first of all you wouldn't introduce any legislation that you knew the President didn't want. He's a part of the team, he's calling the shots. If you disagree with him, if you violently disagree with him, there's only one thing for you to do--leave! If you can't be loyal to the man that you're working for then you get out. That's always been my basic philosophy. But once you've discussed it with the President and he has heard your views, he generally gives great weight to department heads, but he may have some other reason why he wants to go a different way, and if that's the decision, then you follow that decision. And if you can't follow it, in fairness to the President--get out!

I think one of the most important jobs of a cabinet member is protecting the President, to see that he doesn't get into any difficulty. Now there were programs, which we introduced, which the secretary himself would take the initiative rather than the White House, because if the secretary proved wrong, the President could always overrule him; but if the President called the shot and was wrong, it's hard for a President to

reverse himself. There were many times when I would say to President Kennedy or President Johnson, "I'm not too sure about the public reaction to this legislation." Better let me take the initiative on it. And if the reaction is bad, you can reverse me; if the reaction is good, then you can take the credit for it. " And I think that's part of your job.

M: Well, when you say you take the initiative, you mean you take it with the President's blessing.

C: Yes. But you are not getting him publicly involved in it.

M: You've mentioned "publicly involved" and you've mentioned "newspaper men" a couple of times. Mr. Johnson apparently reacted very negatively to a lot of newspaper men too. Did secrecy bother your operations much? Did he give demands that things be done so secretly?

M; I don't know that we ever did very many things secretly; it is impossible. You would go to a cabinet meeting and there is the full cabinet and their assistants, there are twenty-five people there. Now you know that anything that's said in that, you can't keep it a secret. I always took a basic philosophy both as mayor and as a cabinet member, there's nothing off the record. If you can't put it on the record, then keep quiet about it, because if there are two people in the room it leaks out. [laughter]

M: Well, you know the story was, though, that major appointments, for example, which leaked to the press in advance, that Mr. Johnson would then sometimes not make those appointments. Did you ever experience that?

C: No, I never experienced that with the President.

M: One of the measures that was passed while you were secretary was the creation of Housing and Urban Development as a cabinet division, I believe--

C: Yes, Bob Weaver was head of that.

M: You were, of course, urban mayor and lived in a big city all of your life. One of the charges made against Mr. Johnson is that he didn't understand urban problems. Did you ever talk to him about urban problems?

C: That's just plain ridiculous. He understood more about urban problems than the fellow who lived in the urban area. There's no doubt about that in my mind.You couldn't help but, and be majority leader in the Senate, know about urban problems, because you had all those urban senators in there.

M: Right.

C: And you had the urban congressmen in and they were calling these problems to your attention. We went down as mayors, and we talked to the then Senate Majority Leader Johnson about urban problems, and it's just plain ridiculous to say that President Johnson didn't understand urban problems! And the proof of that is by the massive amount of the domestic legislation which he got through which helped the urban communities.

M: Did he talk well, or react well, with urban people? When he'd come to Cleveland, for example, did he do well with Cleveland crowds?

C: Well, basically when a President comes to a particular community and you from the community sort of give him a feeling of things in a community. And many times suggest things that he might say. That's just par for the course.

M: So his success was due at least in part to having good advice beforehand.

C: That's right.

M: Do you think he sympathized with urban Americans as much as, say, rural Americans, or small-town Americans?

C: There's no doubt about it in my mind. If he hadn't had that feeling of help

to urban America, we would never have gotten this massive amount, as I said, of domestic programs through. I think that he realized more than others--we kept talking about slums in urban America. There are just as many slums in rural America, and I think he had an understanding of both. And of course the poverty program covered that.

M: Are there any other areas of major activity while you were secretary where you became directly involved with the President that you would like to mention here? I also want to talk, particularly, about the circumstances of your departure as you mentioned before we started here, but I don't want you to leave anything out either, because of my lack of asking.

C: Well, most of my contacts were not directly with the President, as I stated before, because my own basic philosophy that I just didn't want to bother the President. I worked with the staff members on it. They were informed and I presumed the staff members then informed the President on it. It was not because I couldn't get in to see the President, it was because of my own personal philosophy that he had enough problems, and anything that I could personally do to take some of the weight off of him was my responsibility. I should have done that, and I did do that. As I say, the massive program that we had to handle at least in the three years and the three weeks that I was there was just tremendous, and if I wanted to talk to the President about every detail I'd be living at the White House. But at no time did I ever call the President where I called for aid that he didn't come to my aid in legislative programs.

M: And so far as you know when you said something to the staff man it got reported to him accurately?

C: No doubt about it. I had great confidence in his assistants.

M: That would seem to me to be a critical necessity for successful relations

between the departments and the White House.

C: Well, you have to maintain liaison, you have to. Just as my responsibility was to coordinate all the branches of HEW, the President's responsibility is to coordinate all the departments of government. And of course he can't do it alone, he had to delegate authority to his assistants to do it.

I would like to, perhaps--I stressed the amount of legislation that was passed at least during my tenure. Now Johnson became President in November 1963, as you recall. I left the office about the first of August 1965. During that period--under Johnson, this is only legislation passed under Johnson, not under Kennedy. Thirty-six major new laws were passed, or were in the process of being passed, and those that weren't passed were finally passed in September 1965, but they were all those that I had testified on. And most of these thirty-four represented major breakthroughs in meeting the human needs that the President was well aware of.

I think one of the problems that the public doesn't understand, and one of the challenges of being secretary of HEW was the wide variety of subject matter, areas on which you're called upon to testify. For example, one day we're talking about clean air, the next day you'll be talking about hospital and medical facilities, the next day you'd be talking about educational research problems, technical social security amendments. And then after that--in other words, the department just covers the whole spectrum of human problems. Now, among the thirty-six major bills passed were the Higher Education Facilities Act in 1963, which did much for higher education. Later on the Higher Education Facilities Act Amendments of 1965. The Clean Air Act, the Vocational-Education Act of '63, the Manpower Development and Training Act amendments of 1963; the Library

Services and Construction Act, which was a very important piece of legislation; of course, the Civil Rights Act of '64; the Economic Opportunity Act of '64; the Graduate Public Health Training Amendments of '64; the Nurses Training Act of 1964; and another very important one which tied in with the poverty program was the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965; the Elementary and Secondary Education of '65, which I spoke of earlier; the Manpower Act of 1965; the National Technical Institute for the Deaf Act. Not many people are aware of the importance of that. Of course the Older Americans Act of 1965, which covered a broad field in the area of geriatrics. Another important piece of legislation was the Drug Abuse Control Amendment of 1965. You recall prior to my becoming secretary, if you manufactured a pill which did no good, but did no harm, we would license it. You could go out and sell sugar pills. Well, we amended that. Part of that was responsible because of the Kefauver investigation of food and drug. We amended that. You also had to prove the efficacy of the drug.

M: Had to actually do something good.

C: Had to do something. Of course that also applied to all the previous drugs that had been licensed, and of course when the ACT was passed they had to reapply. Of course the department was just swamped at that time with that. The School Facilities Construction Amendments in the area of education. The Community Health Centers Act Amendments of 1965; and the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities.

M: I've seen some direct benefits from that myself.

C: The Health Science Library Assistance Act. The National Vocation Student Loan Insurance Act of 1965, that did more to help people go to school than any other act that I know. The Emigration and Nationality Act, that

was an important one.

M: I didn't realize that would be HEW.

C: Yes. I testified--these are bills which I--

M: Oh, I see.

C: The National Service Corps Act. And of course the programs that Kennedy was vitally interested in were the Mental Retardation Act that we finally got, and the Maternal Child Health Act. And the important one was the Medical Libraries Act. And we had the Juvenile Delinquency Youth Defense Control Act amendments and the Hill-Burton Medical Facilities amendments of '64; the National Defense Education Act amendments of 1965; and the Water Resources Planning Act. Then, of course, we had the one that I mentioned earlier--the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act; the Community Health Service Extension amendments of 1965; the Health Research Facilities amendments of '65; and the Public Works and Economic Development Act of '65; the Correction and Rehabilitation Study Act of 1965; and of course the other very important piece of legislation which passed a month after I left was the Heart, Cancer, and Stroke, which are the three leading killers in America, in which we tried to coordinate and make possible to build more medical schools. Also because of the shortage of the technical people in that area we thought by establishing these community complexes that we could bring that expert knowledge to more people. By establishing these complexes we would then bring to a greater number of people services which were available which they could not receive because they lived distances away or could not afford it. And that has worked out, I think, rather well on it.

M: This is a guess, and I know you can't really answer with extreme accuracy, but how many of these would not have been passed had it not been for Mr.

Johnson's efforts?

C: I would have to say at least 70 percent of them.

M: That's a very high percentage.

C: Yes. And it was not--by that--of course it's hard to tell. I'm just giving you an educated guess. There didn't seem to be the extreme cooperative spirit on the part of the Congress that was granted to Johnson, but that did not seem to exist when Kennedy was there. Now of course he was there only two and a half years, and that may have changed. We may have reached a peak and probably, but I really don't believe that 70 percent of these would have been passed if it hadn't been for President Johnson's know-how, his driving force, and his knowledge of the workings of Congress, and his personal contact with the members of Congress.

M: You left in the summer of '65, what were the circumstances behind your leaving to come where you are now?

C: Well, I had made a commitment to President Kennedy that I would stay long enough to get a medicare bill through and a secondary and primary education bill through. Well, I tacked down about thirty other bills too. [laughter] I fulfilled that obligation. We were at the ranch again, President Johnson and I were taking a walk and I decided that when I got these bills through that I wanted to return back to my own profession which was the profession of law. And at that time this Sixth Circuit opened up and the President said, "I'll give you anything you want. You can stay or you can leave." I told him. One, I had found it extremely difficult to live in Washington on my salary and meet all the obligations of a cabinet officer. That I couldn't take the financial loss much longer, and I thought I better make the shift. And that's why I left and came to the judiciary.

M: The period of 1965 to when Mr. Johnson left office, did you have any further contact with him then, after you came back and took this job?

C: Yes. I think I was at the White House twice after that and saw the President, not as an individual, but at White House functions. The judges had something doing at the White House and we stopped in to see the President. Outside of that I haven't had any contact with him except a letter or two every once in awhile.

M: Are there any other subjects that you would like to mention in way of summary, or added on here?

C: Well, I just hope that when the history is written that they will give due credit to President Johnson for his contribution in domestic problems. It's unfortunate that we were involved in this war, which I think completely overshadowed the good that he had done for this nation.

M: Was that already hurting the domestic programs by the time you left? Were you already beginning to get pinched on funds?

C: Just starting at the time. I didn't feel--of course, the full impact of that didn't come until after '64. Some people who are of the opinion that Johnson had campaigned on "No American boys going over on foreign soil," they thought that he didn't live up to that pledge, and that's when it really started.

M: Did you campaign much for him in '64?

C: Oh, yes, I covered eighteen states.

M: Eighteen!

C: I covered eighteen states. And here again it was rather ironical that after the election I picked up a Washington paper and the article said that Johnson was going to displace me because I had refused to campaign! Both the President and I got a good chuckle out of that one! [laughter]

M: Did he give you specific assignments for the campaign?

C: Well, they came from the Democratic national headquarters, the President never assigned you. I was out at the West Coast--

M: You didn't just say, talk to Catholic constituency, big-city constituency?

C: No. These were speeches in small and big towns, and big cities. They even sent me to Orange County in Los Angeles which was a died-in-the-wool Republican county, very conservative and I had that feeling. I was down at Corpus Christi in Texas, Denver, New York, and Chicago.

M: That doesn't say much for the press, if they thought you didn't campaign after eighteen states.

C: I called the young man, the reporter, and I sent him a list. Fortunately I had kept a list of all my speaking appointments, and he apologized to me over the phone, but he never retracted.

M: It doesn't do them any good for them to retract it anyway. Well, anything you would like to add, feel free to do so. I don't want you to feel that I'm cutting you off in any way.

C: No, I don't think so. Basically there were so many things that were done as secretary of HEW, at least in my tenure, but they are all recorded in the official reports that I had to file with the President. The changes that I made in the administrative procedure, the savings that I made by greater use of computers, and we went to a central payroll thing. I think it saved us a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. There were other changes I made in the physical structure and administration. Again, based on my experience as an administrator.

But I'd have to say this also, that I never worked with a more dedicated group of people than I worked with at HEW. Now you must remember that some of them, most of them, were career people; they were there long

before the secretary came and they'd be there long after. But I got good work out of them. Oh, there were a few disgruntled individuals. You're bound to have some because I think at the time that I left the budget had gone up to almost 24 billion, and almost 90 thousand employees under my jurisdiction. We had, besides the public health hospitals that we had, we had 400 other field offices. We were involved in customs too, you know. If you come in and had to be vaccinated. And we were involved with the Indians. I'll never forget, I wanted to build a brand new hospital for the Indians out in Arizona, but they wouldn't use it.

M: The Indians wouldn't use it?

C: They wouldn't use it. So I finally told the surgeon general, "Why don't the doctors work with their medicine men, have them both there." That didn't work too well, so finally what we did, I said to the surgeon general, "Why don't we get some Indian girls and train them as nurses? Bring them in as nurses so they can work with their own people." And we started to do that and that made the difference.

M: Well, I certainly thank you for your time. The purpose of this of course is to extend the written record that you mention, and sort of humanize it and I think that you have done that, and that's what we intended. We appreciate very much--

C: I tried, as I say, I tried to stay away from too many of the technicalities of the department, because, as I say, the record is there.

M: The record will have that and there's no reason to write down something that is already written down somewhere else.

C: No, and I might say this. It was not easy being in the cabinet, being the first member of an ethnic group to be appointed to the cabinet. It was not easy. I think perhaps I worked harder than anybody else for that

basic reason, being number one in it. I don't know why Kennedy ever appointed me. I never asked for the job, never asked for any appointment. Perhaps--I had met Kennedy, he had been to Cleveland while I was mayor. Perhaps it was because I was past president of the two mayors' organizations. Perhaps it was because the Democratic headquarters had called me just before he was going to Vienna, I think, to talk to Khrushchev and they asked me if I couldn't organize the mayors of America and get a proclamation from them in support of the President's position. And in two weeks I had the proclamation and 1500 mayors signed cards. Or perhaps it was being mayor of a large city I understood the problems of the human people. I don't think I could have fitted in any other position, because of my concern for people. I just like people, period. I like to do things for them, but I also want them to do things for themselves. But do say that there was always a feeling, not among my cabinet members, but outside, that coming from the ethnic groups--"What are you doing in the cabinet?" And I hope that will be disspelled. I think it is disspelled because shortly after that Gronnuski, who was Polish--

M: Right. I also talked to Gronouski, and he mentioned--I think he mentioned, and I'm sure he wouldn't mind my saying so--that maybe his way was a little easier because Anthony Celebrezze had already been a cabinet member.

C: Well, I was really surprised at the indirect prejudices that existed. I never let it get me down, I just kept plugging away at it.

M: I think the record, as you mentioned, the thirty-six pieces of legislation will show what hard work you do.

C: Now I didn't have that trouble with Congress, I never had the feeling in Congress. It was people--

M: The bureaucracy.

C: Bureaucracy and people from the outside power structure. I think I can give you a classic example. I like to tell it, because I think it makes a point.

I was at an embassy dinner one night with my wife Anne, I won't mention the embassy. And sitting next to me was an old dowager who had more sparkling diamonds, and she looked down at the name and of course when you look down at the name you see a lot of "e's", and she said, "Greek?"

And I said, "No, ma'am, I am of Italian ancestry." I said, "I was born there, came here when I was two years old." I didn't come here, my parents brought me here. I was the only of thirteen children who was born in the old country. There were twelve born here.

And she said, "You a member of the President's cabinet?"

And I said, "Yes, ma'am."

"And you were born in Italy? Were your parents of the nobility?"

I said, "No. They were the peasant class."

"Well, how did you get to be a member of the President's Cabinet?"

And I looked at her and said, "Brains, Madam, brains!" And that stopped that conversation. [laughter]

M: Probably stopped the rest of the conversation at the dinner, and this one too, for that matter.

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By Anthony J. Celebrezze

to the

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