



John P. Roche
Connally Primed
To Be Veep

THE RESIGNATION of Secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally Jr., accompanied as it was by hearty Presidential plaudits, can be interpreted in a number of ways. However, as is often the case in this world, the simplest explanation makes the most sense: that President Nixon is putting him out to pasture until the Republican National Convention, where Connally will be selected as Vice Presidential nominee. Whatever happens to the economy between now and August, Connally will be clean because he is out of the line of fire. The fact that he is nominally a Democrat is irrelevant. Mr. Nixon is fond enough of his history to recall that the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, chose a Democrat, Andrew Johnson, as his running mate in 1864.

THERE ARE several dimensions of this scenario that need exploration. First, what about Vice President Spiro T. Agnew? Would the President dump him in favor of Connally? I doubt it. But suppose Agnew really does not want the job? You may recall that when I asked him if he wanted to run again, Agnew threw back at me the question, "Should anyone run for Vice President unless he wants to be President?" A delphic reply, but one that indicated—as did the Vice President's generally relaxed attitude—a certain absence of fiery ambition. After all, when you look at the job description, there is little point in being Vice President unless you see it as a launching pad. Otherwise, as one of Agnew's predecessors observed, your only real function is to drop in daily, and inquire after the President's health.

Not only is Connally a tremendously ambitious and

talented man, but he would fit the Agnew niche in the administration: he is vigorous, fighting conservative. Those who have billed him as Lyndon Johnson's protégé have confused personal friendship with ideological agreement; Johnson is an elemental Populist. As an individual who knows both men intimately once told me, "They're close friends, but Lyndon couldn't get John to go to the grocery

store, politically speaking, unless the governor wanted to."

IN FACT, Connally has no base in the Texas Democratic Party as of 1972; the recent primaries symbolized the total defeat of what was once the Connally wing (which seems to have taken to stealing since his firm hand was removed from the tiller). The liberal wing holds the commanding heights, and conservative Texas Democrats are in effect ready and waiting to go Republican. With Connally out there in front, the odds are that Texas would end up in the Nixon column—and in the event Wallace does take the third-party route again, Connally would be a powerful antidote in the South. (He too survived an assassination attempt, an accidental factor that would nonetheless neutralize the sympathy vote for Wallace.)

Most important, John Connally is a driven man. The notion of him prowling around a ranch in Texas, or making money, is just plain out of character. He loves power and is extraordinarily skilled in its exercise. He would run for Vice President precisely because he wants some day to be President and he would be an immense asset to the Republican ticket. It adds up: one of the ablest men in American politics today (with whom, of course, I disagree profoundly on most social issues) has recognized the Democratic Party as a dead-end street. On the other hand, he finds a natural convergence of political and ideological interests with President Nixon. Two and two usually equal four.

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