

Connally: High Court Is Not Always Supreme

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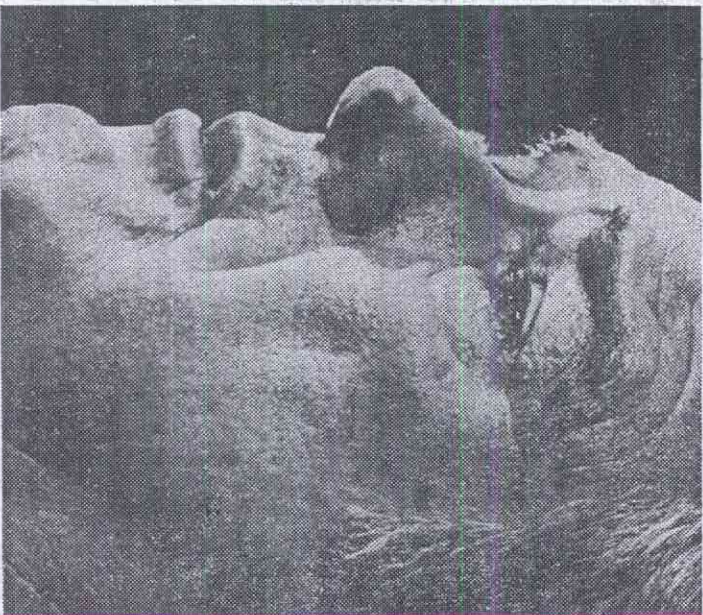
Former Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, making his Washington debut as a Republican presidential possibility, said last night that President Nixon could well be justified in ignoring any Supreme Court decision to turn over the Watergate tapes.

"We're leading ourselves into believing the Supreme Court is the ultimate arbiter of all disputes," Connally said, "and I don't believe it. I think there are times when the President of the United States would be right in not obeying a decision of the Supreme Court."

Connally discussed Watergate and the GOP future with newsmen before taking the star turn as the guest of honor at a reception his new comrades in the Texas Republican Party gave for the assembled members of the Republican National Committee.

Last night's stop was part of a cross-country speaking tour which Connally, a former Lyndon Johnson protégé who switched to the Republican Party last May, acknowledges is designed in part to test his prospects for the 1976 nomination. Telling reporters he would "stipulate"

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John Connally: "... I might ask for a wiretap ..."

By Ken Fell—The Washington Post

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

Republican Party Chairman George Bush said yesterday that the GOP is surviving Watergate and winning special elections because the national Democratic Party is "too far left for the American people" and because of public reaction to press preoccupation with the Watergate issue.

Bush said the recent victory of Republican Robert Bauman in a Maryland congressional election "demonstrated that the voters are fair—they do not take out scandal on a party when the party itself is clean and uninvolved."

"Some few billed it as a test of Watergate, but when Bauman won right here in range of a uni-issue press, this side of it was discounted," Bush said. "Could you imagine if we had lost that race?"

Delegates to the semi-annual meeting of the Republican National Committee here cheered and applauded Bush's remark, as they did most of his several criticisms of press coverage of the Watergate issue and the Republican Party.

In a report to the committee of the state of the party after eight months

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Connally: Nixon's Stand Could Be Justified

CONNALLY FROM A1

that the question was on his mind, he said he would not decide until 1975 whether to make the race. So far, he said, his reception has been "excellent," but that "does not indicate a complete unanimity of acceptance."

In his press conference, Connally disowned such past administration decisions as the scrapping of Phase II economic controls and the 1972 wheat sale to Russia, but he came down foursquare behind the President on the question of the Watergate tapes.

While Mr. Nixon himself has said he would obey a "definitive" Supreme Court

decision, without defining the term, Connally indicated he thought the President might be in his rights to ignore any ruling.

Telling newsmen he did not want to discuss the merits of the tapes controversy, he said it was wrong, in his view, to believe that the judiciary is necessarily supreme in such a case. "If there is merit in the structure of this government, with three co-equal branches," he said, it is "sure" that there are times when a President could ignore an adverse Supreme Court ruling.

Connally also backed Mr. Nixon's right to conduct wiretaps for national security, al-

though he said he found them distasteful himself. He said he had no knowledge, as Secretary of Treasury in part of Mr. Nixon's first term, that Secret Service agents, who were in his department, had tapped the telephone of Mr. Nixon's brother, Donald.

"If I were President," he said, "I can foresee a time when I might ask for a wiretap on someone. . . . When it's a question of the security of the nation and the right of the individual, the legal rights of the individual must give way."

Nonetheless, Connally said, he believes the main difference between his old party and his new one is that "the

preservation of personal, human liberties is given greater hope under a Republican administration."

Connally declined to discuss the current investigation of Vice President Agnew, but said he had admired Agnew's "strength of conviction" since the days when they were both governors.

The Texan said the Watergate affair had left "neither party . . . in good shape," but said that polls he has seen show "the Republicans have not been hurt any more than the Democrats. Only 44 per cent of the people will admit they belong to either party, so there's a challenge for both

parties to try to get them back."

Connally, who was an architect of the Phase I wage-price freeze in 1971, said the decision to end Phase II controls last January (after he had left the Administration) "was a mistake."

He said the best advice he has now is that "the faster we can get away from (the remaining) controls, the better."

He said he agreed with his successor in Treasury, George P. Shultz, that the Russian wheat deal looked better at the time it was made than it does in retrospect.

"That's life," said Connally. "I've sold things I wish I'd held onto."

GOP Chief Says Party Lost Because Democrats Took

GOP, From A1

backers had reduced their contributions because of Watergate. But he maintained the GOP was otherwise unaffected and cited special election victories in Alaska, California, Maryland and Mississippi.

"The headlines of the past six months have obscured two very important things," Bush said. "First, they have obscured the fact that the Democrats are in disarray . . . 'losing elections they should have been winning and losing important leaders from their party folds because their party nationally is too far left for the American people and facing a most precipitous decline in numbers of those willing to identify as Democrats.

"Second, the headlines have until very recently obscured the fact that we have been winning elections . . ." Bush said.

Bush, a former Texas congressman who was handpicked by President Nixon last January to replace Kansas Sen. Bob Dole as GOP chairman, said he had held 43 news conferences in 27 states and made seven national television appearances since taking the job.

"In almost every one of these appearances almost every question was on Watergate," Bush said.

In asserting that the "Nixon mandate is still valid in the fall of '73," Bush contended that the Republican Party was on the popular side of the issues in advocating a strong defense, control of inflation, and revenue sharing. But he confessed to some concern about the economy.

"People . . . are upset at food prices and inflation—and we must do better here—but

they don't want a highly controlled economy and they know real income is up," he said.

Similar unconcern about Watergate, coupled with the belief that the economy could damage GOP candidates in 1974, was expressed by other party leaders.

"I think a lot depends on the economy, which doesn't look too good right now," said Virginia National Committeewoman Cynthia Newman in assessing the impact of issues on her state's gubernatorial race this fall. She said that GOP candidate Mills Godwin was behind but gaining.

New Jersey National Committeeman Bernard M. Shanley said Watergate was no factor in New Jersey, where a gubernatorial election will be held in November. Here, too, Shanley assessed the GOP candidate as trailing but gaining ground.

Gordon Luce, state chairman in California where Republicans have won five out of seven special elections, said the economy and the environment in that order loom as the major issues in next year's gubernatorial election. Luce said that "Watergate has almost helped our party" in California in the past six months because it has encouraged party workers to work harder in special election races.

"The economy is going to be predominant," he said. "It's being determined in Washington but it will affect Republican candidates in California."

Minnesota National Committeeman Rudy Boschwitz said that Watergate isn't an issue hurting Republicans but that corporate contributions to the GOP could prove a liability.

"A much larger problem than Watergate is the continu-