

Post 6/1/72
Connally's Return to Texas

John B. Connally is going back to the Lone Star State—and according to one of your reporters:

"The decision was almost incomprehensible at a time when Connally seemed to be at the zenith of his power not only as the economic mastermind of the administration, but also as a key foreign policy adviser." (Washington Post, Wednesday, May 17, 1972.)

I hold that John B. Connally was waiting for the proper moment to leave the administration because he had already made all the hard-nosed, often unpopular, domestic and foreign economic policy decisions that President Nixon wanted.

As a student of Texas politics, let me propose that his decision to leave Washington crystallized when his political machine was sidetracked during the recent Texas Democratic primary. Being the political operator that he is, how can Connally assure President Nixon Texas support for his re-election with a hobbled political machine? Texas is a key state with 26 electoral votes. Nixon lost these to Humphrey in 1968.

His beatable, unbeatable protege Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes lost his bid for governor with a third place finish in a seven-man field. The incumbent Gov. Preston Smith did not carry a single one of the 254 counties in Texas, even with the shenanigans that took place in Duval County (shades of LBJ). Texas voters also ousted 16 or 17 other state legislators and the state's attorney general.

That's not all: former Senator Ralph Yarborough, a liberal by Texas standards, forced LBJ's onetime aide "Barefoot" Sanders into a runoff. The victor will face GOP Senator John Tower.

Indeed, the proper moment had come for his departure. How could the tall Texan let a woman (and a liberal to boot) become the first woman governor of the Lone Star State since 1924? "Ma" Ferguson was the first. "Sissy" Farenthold forced Dolph Briscoe into a June 3 runoff. This sharp-tongued Houston lawyer has a fighting chance to win.

(As an aside, Mrs. Farenthold called for the removal of the all white Texas Rangers from populous Chicano sections of south Texas.

(It was John B. Connally and the Texas Rangers that kept farm worker organizers from reaching Austin, Texas, to present their complaints. Later, a Civil Rights Commission report showed evidence that the Texas Rangers had been used as strike breakers in Rio Grande City where the farm worker movement was all but killed.)

So it's back to the ranch for John B. for more bar-b-cuin', hand shakin', arm twistin' and machine patchin'.

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