



James Reston Report

By James Reston
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John B. Connally of Texas has entered the presidential race by denying that he was doing anything of the sort. "I seek no office, political or appointive," he said in a deception almost worthy of the Watergate.

Why politicians insist on peddling this kind of malarkey, especially at a time when the country is crying for a president who will just speak the truth, is a mystery, but Big John presented himself anyway as a modest character who would just be around in case anybody needed a little help.

"We all serve in different

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ways," he observed. "John Milton said 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' Hopefully that's the role I can play."

Well, if Big John, like the old Puritan divine Milton, has decided to stand and wait and acquiesce in God's will, it will be the first time he has ever adopted such a strategy, and it will almost certainly fail.

For one thing is fairly clear at this very early date in the 1976 campaign: Nobody is going to hand a standing and waiting Connally the nomination of the Republican party. He's going to have to run like hell and capture it in the primaries, and if she does he might just take it over.

TIES

He has some disadvantages. He is a new boy with some prominent ties to big business, and after cam-

paign spending scandals of 1972, the Republican alliance with the big spenders is certainly going to be a major issue.

Still, he is probably the most effective campaigner in the field. He has been governor of Texas and secretary of both the Navy and the Treasury, and he has more energy and brass than a 10-ton tank.

It is slightly ridiculous even to make winter book on the likely Republican candidates at this time, but some things are fairly obvious.

Age will be a factor for one thing. Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York will be 67 at convention time in 1976, Governor Ronald Reagan of California will be 65, Connally 59, vice president Spiro Agnew 57, and Senator Charles Percy of Illinois, 56.

Rockefeller and Percy will probably be dividing the lib-

eral Republican vote, Agnew, Reagan, and Connally contesting the conservative Republican vote, and here Connally will probably have an advantage of appealing effectively across the board and also of picking up some strength in the South and among conservative Democrats.

Much, of course, will depend on whether the present scandals will be forgotten by 1976. The chances are that they will not, and this is bound to hurt Agnew.

SCANDALS

Oddly, the Watergate scandals have opened up an unexpected opportunity for Elliot L. Richardson of Massachusetts. He has been successively under secretary of State, secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, secretary of Defense, and is now on his way to the Justice Department with

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responsibility for clearing up the Watergate mess.

He has played an odd role in this administration. He came here with the reputation of a highly intelligent and objective man, head of the Harvard Law Review, clerk to Justice Felix Frankfurter, but the longer he has been here the more political he has become the investigation himself.

Nevertheless, his chance now as attorney general-designate is to demonstrate, not his willingness to be a party propagandist for Mr. Nixon, as he was in the last campaign, but as champion of the public interest.

He could be a formidable compromise Republican candidate in 1976.

One of the surprises of these last few weeks is that none of the potential Democratic candidates has come forward with a really effective speech defining the magnitude of the crisis and pointing the way out of it.