

AGNEW DEFENDED IN CONNALLY TALK

G.O.P. Women Seem Divided
on Former Democrat

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John B. Connally took his traveling political road show before the National Federation of Republican Women today and received a mixed response from this organization of grass-roots party loyalists.

In interviews and comments, delegates made it clear that they admired the former Texas Governor as a "strong man" who had the "courage of his convictions" to abandon the Democratic party and join the G.O.P. But many seemed to feel that he still had to "prove himself" before he merited consideration for high national office.

In a tub-thumping political speech, the silver-haired orator delivered a strong defense of Vice President Agnew, who will appear here tomorrow, and said that Mr. Agnew had been given "a very rough deal" by news reports concerning the investigation of him now under way in Maryland.

But in what one observer called the "Freudian slip of the year," Mr. Connally declared in ringing tones:

"I like you, hope and pray that the facts are such that he's completely exonerated and that he is indeed found guilty."

Some Later Regrets

At a news conference after his speech Governor Connally apologized for his slip and said that he had meant to say "not."

Party officials and the more than 3,000 delegates gathered at the Los Angeles Convention Center seemed to be trying hard to put a bright face on

their party's current troubles. The national chairman, George Bush, for instance, reiterated his familiar contention that the G.O.P. had not been harmed by Watergate and the recent investigation of Mr. Agnew.

But an air of defensiveness touched many comments. Rabbi Edgar Magnin, in his invocation, reminded the convention that "nobody is perfect" and urged them not to give way to "skepticism, cynicism or despair."

Mr. Connally acknowledged that "occasionally there is a bit of darkness" in all political lives, but said that the "proud heritage" of the Republican party would survive "today's headlines."

One delegate from Long Beach, Calif., probably conveyed the majority sentiment when she was asked how she felt about the Agnew case. "This coming on top of everything else," she sighed, "it just seems to be a bit much."

At the same time, the delegates seemed to be almost unanimous in their feeling that Mr. Agnew should not resign and should fight his case through to the point of being found guilty in court of some crime. The most common phrase one heard today was that a person is "innocent until proven guilty," and most of the women agreed with Governor Connally's view that Mr. Agnew has gotten a "rough deal."

Yet the delegates to this convention are experienced professionals, they know the facts of political life, and few believe that Vice President Agnew's political career can survive the current trouble. And they are well aware of the speculation that Governor Connally might be named to succeed Mr. Agnew, should the Vice President be removed from Office.

Mr. Connally turned aside most questions about the Vice President's plight but made sev-

eral observations that bore on his own prospects to succeed Mr. Agnew.

Asked what problems he had encountered winning friends among Republicans after a long career as a Democrat, Mr. Connally insisted that he had remained "consistent" in his beliefs and had met no sizable roadblock to his conversion.

Asked if he could conceive of a situation in which he would succeed to the Vice Presidency, Mr. Connally conceded that he could, but he insisted that he did not think that it would happen.

When a reporter said that Congressional Democrats might object to some possible nominees for Vice President, including him, Governor Connally insisted that the President should have a completely free hand in selecting any successor to Mr. Agnew and that the country should not be saddled with a "caretaker" Vice President.