Bribe Trial Opens

By Timothy S. Robinson Washington Post Staff Writer

The Watergate Special Prosecution Force will begin atjury today that millionaire Special Prosecutor Frank Tupolitician John B. Connally erkheimer and defense attortook \$10,000 in bribes while he ney Edward Bennett Williams was Secretary of the Treasury under President Nixon.

Forty-four prospective jurors survived an initial screen-ing yesterday in U. S. District Court before Chief Judge room to whittle the panel George L. Hart Jr., and the final 18 jurors — including six

The questioning of the ju-

group will be placed in the jury box this morning.

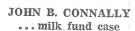
preliminary The screening moved swiftly yestempting to convince a federal terday as Assistant Watergate asked the jurors in open court about their knowledge of the Connally case. Judge Hart then conducted more detailed

alternates - from among that rors added little to previously

disclosed information about the charges against Connally, who took notes occasionally on a yellow legal pad as the jury selection process was under way.

The prosecutors, based on previous disclosures and yesterday's questions to the jury, apparently intend to base their case largely on the testimony of Texas lawyer Jake Jacobsen, who said he paid the money to Connally in 1971 in two installments of \$5,000 each for his support in recommend-

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ing a milk price support increase.

To bolster the testimony of that witness — who has pleaded guilty to bribing Conthat was rejected by a federal judge in Texas — the prosecutors will be playing at least two, and possibly three, White House tapes in which the milk price support increase was discussed.

Other witnesses will include and Trust Co. branch across Cork) Co from the hotel 15th and M attorney. Streets NW, who reportedly Connai at the bank and discussions they had with Jacobsen at the hotel during the time he allegedly passed the money to Con-nally. The actual cash transactions allegedly occurred in the Treasury Secretary's office.

Defense attorney Williams

has said previously he has a Judge Hart last fall ordered basic defense to the charges that Connally stand trial first against his client, Connally: on the two specific counts re-"He didn't take the money for lating to the alleged cash himself or anyone." Connally transactions of \$5,000 each. has said in testimony before The other counts of perjury the Senate Watergate committand conspiracy nally in a controversial plea tee that Jacobsen offered him alleged plot by Jacobson and bargaining arrangement that \$10,000 at one point but that Connally to cover up the pura federal he refused the offer.

Connally, who said he has tried later. shed about 15 pounds since leaving Washington, had no comment on the trial yesterday. His wife, Nellie, and son, John, were with him in the Other witnesses will include employee of the Madison Hotel and the American Security Dealer Thomas (Tommy the and Trust Co. branch across Cork) Corcoran, a Washington from the hotel 15th and Matterney

Connally is the second forwill testify about transactions mer Cabinet officer in Ameriat the bank and discussions can history to be tried on bribery charges. The first was terior Secretary Albert was Interior Secretary Fall, who was convicted in the Teapot Dome scandal of the 1920s.

However, Connally is the fourth former Nixon administration Cabinet member to face criminal charges. Former Attorney General John N. Attorney General John N. Mitchell was found guilty of perjury, obstruction of justice and conspriacy in the Water-gate cover-up; former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of failing to his indictment on the bribery testify accurately to a Senate charges. committee at a hearing on his nomination; and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans pleaded guilty to five misdemeanor charges relating Inc., he could be sentenced to campaign financing law violations.

ported bribes, and could be

The separation of the counts was seen as a major victory for the Connally defense since it make a jury compromise on the clear cut money issue, unlikely at the time of verdict. The ruling by Hart is not expected to limit severely presentation of evidence about the cover-up, according to in-formed legal sources, since it can still be introduced to show an alleged "consciousness of guilt" on Connally's part

Connally, Secretary of the Navy under President Ken-nedy, was governor of Texas in November, 1963, and was injured by the same gunfire that killed Kennedy in Dallas.

He returned to Washington in 1970 to become Nixon's Treasury Secretary, resigning in May, 1972. He switched from Democrat to Republican a year later, and was mentioned prominently as a presidential contender in 1976

If convicted on the two counts of accepting illegal gratuities from the lawyer for the Associated Milk Producers a maximum of four years in prison and fined up to \$20,000.

A Watergate grand jury in- The jury will not be sequesdicted Connally last July on tered in the trial, which is exfive counts relating to the al- pected to take approximately leged bribe transaction, but three weeks.

Before sending the prospective jurors home last night, Judge Hart admonished them sternly against reading, hearing or watching any news accounts of the trial.