

Judge Frees Connally of All Charges

By J. Y. Smith

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The final three criminal charges against former Texas Gov. John Connally were dismissed by a federal judge here yesterday at the request of the Watergate special prosecutor.

Chief U.S. District Court Judge George L. Hart Jr. took the action one day after a jury acquitted Connally of charges that he accepted two bribes totaling \$10,000 for getting a rise in government milk price supports.

Texas lawyer Jake Jacobsen testified during Connally's 11-day trial that he paid him the money on behalf of dairy producers in two installments in 1971, when Connally was Secretary of the Treasury in the first Nixon administration. Connally denied it.

The charges dismissed yesterday grew out of the same alleged circumstances. They were two counts of perjury in connection with Connally's about the alleged payoff and testimony to a grand jury one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice by committing perjury. Judge Hart ordered last November that these counts be tried separately from the bribery case.

In an affidavit supporting the request that the charges be dropped, Frank M. Tuerkheimer, the assistant special

Watergate prosecutor in the Connally case, said:

"In large part, all of the evidence which would have been admitted on (the perjury and obstruction-of-justice charges was admitted during the (bribery) trial and considered by the jury. Under these circumstances, the government urges that it is in the interest of justice that the) counts be dismissed."

The dismissal had been expected by legal observers on the ground that it was unlikely that Connally would be tried for allegedly lying about an event that a jury had found had never taken place.

Connally was en route home to Austin, Tex., yesterday and could not be reached for comment about the latest development. But he said following his acquittal Thursday:

"I've seen this system of ours work today. It's going to make me more deeply committed ... to making it work in the future."

In San Antonio, Tex., officials of the organization that had been alleged to have supplied the money to bribe Connally said they regretted the former Treasury Secretary was ever brought to trial and were relieved at the news of his acquittal.



Associated Press

Connally and wife, Nellie, in Atlanta en route to Texas.

S.F. Howe, general manager of the Associated Milk Producers, Inc., was quoted by United Press International as saying: "We feel deeply about this because John Connally has always supported a strong agricultural economy. Because of his friendship to dairy farmers, we regret that he has been embarrassed by this tremendous amount of adverse publicity.

"Although we know there is nothing we can do to erase the damage that's been down to

this man, we are certainly relieved that he was found not guilty."

Another AMPI official, John Holmes, said he never had any doubt about the outcome of the trial.

He said, "How could they (the jury) have found otherwise? I've talked to a number of dairy farmers over the past year and they felt he (Connally) had been too good of a friend to the dairy industry to go through this."