

An 'offer' of oil to Nixon

By Morton Kondracke
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WASHINGTON — A White House tape transcript indicates that former Treasury Secretary John Connally once offered President Nixon an allocation of Texas oil, according to the New Republic.

CBS correspondent Fred Graham, reporting in the magazine on Connally's recent bribery trial, also said evidence indicated that milk lobbyist Jake Jacobsen once offered to give criminal evidence against former president Johnson, but that then Attorney General John Mitchell ordered his staff not to pursue the matter.

The new disclosures came, Graham reported, from records of closed-door proceedings in the Connally trial. Connally was found not guilty of accepting bribes in connection with Nixon administration milk-price supports.

According to Graham, a

previously secret White House tape recorded the following private conversation between Connally and Nixon on March 23, 1971:

CONNALLY: "It's on my honor, to make sure that, that, there — there's a very substantial allocation of oil in Texas that you, that - that will be at your discretion."

PRESIDENT: "Fine."

CONNALLY: "Unless you want somebody else to do it. Somebody . . ."

PRESIDENT: "No."

According to Graham, the Watergate special prosecutor's effort to have a tape transcript introduced in evidence at the trial was rejected in a secret session by U.S. District Court Judge George Hart Jr.

When a prosecutor asked about the offer, Connally said he and the President were discussing revenue-sharing and that he had told Nixon "a substantial allocation of taxes" would be at

his discretion.

A major point of Graham's article was that the Connally trial was split into a public session and secret deliberations in the judge's chambers, where significant evidence was ruled inadmissible.

Graham also reported that, in the public trial, Connally lawyer Edward Bennett Williams asked Jacobsen if Jacobsen once had offered to give testimony against Johnson. Jacobsen denied it.

Graham's account continued: "Nothing more was heard publicly about this intriguing point. In the secret trial, Williams told Judge Hart that, if he were allowed to challenge this assertion, he would back it up" by subpoenaing Mitchell and former Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen.

Williams said they would testify that a Justice Department lawyer told Petersen that Jacobsen and his attorney

made the offer of evidence against Johnson, that Petersen told Mitchell about it and that the charge was "summarily dismissed as an inevident exploration," Graham said. "Judge Hart made it clear that he didn't want the LBJ sideshow performed at his trial."