

PRESIDENT VISITS CONNALLY'S RANCH

MAY 1 1972

Takes Detour on Trip From Florida to Washington to Meet Key Texans NYTimes

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.
Special to The New York Times

FLORESVILLE, Tex., April 30 — President Nixon flew here tonight to share beef tenderloin and black-eyed peas with John B. Connally and 200 powerful Texans, most of whom have been vital to Mr. Connally's political past and many of whom may be persuaded to be useful to Mr. Nixon's political future.

In a carefully planned detour on his way to Washington from his Key Biscayne vacation retreat, Mr. Nixon arrived here late this afternoon to take a brief tour of Mr. Connally's 3,500-acre Picoso Ranch and to shake hands with prominent Republicans and Democrats invited to dinner.

The trip advertised the President's political and philosophical ties with the only Democrat in his Cabinet and one of the most influential Democrats in Texas.

It was a simple stand-up dinner under a large yellow-and-white-striped tent on the Connally lawn. The host, however, had installed lights on his landing strip to accommodate the private aircraft of some of his guests.

Both Mr. Connally and the

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White House said that the Secretary of the Treasury long ago invited Mr. Nixon and his wife to visit the ranch and that the President came today because he found the timing convenient.

Yet the dinner had heavy political overtones, and members of the President's entourage did not deny these overtones without a smile.

Inevitably, the meeting here tonight will fuel speculation that Mr. Connally will wind up as the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate. But the President has said publicly that Vice President Agnew remains his first choice for the second spot. The most Mr. Connally

has said is that he will defend the Administration's economic policies — most of which he helped draft — in the coming campaign.

Texas Victory Prospects

The Vice Presidential question aside, most observers believe that Mr. Connally's active support may well help the President's chances in a state with 26 vital electoral votes — a state Mr. Nixon lost by 39,000 votes out of some three-million cast and that he thinks he can win this year.

Tactically speaking, Mr. Connally—or at least one member of his family—might also benefit from the President's visit. His brother, Wayne, is running for Lieutenant Governor on a ticket headed by the present

Lieutenant Governor, Ben Barnes.

No local candidates, including Wayne Connally and Mr. Barnes, were included on tonight's guest list, reporters were told, but there were some here who believed that the President's obvious display of loyalty and affection for his Secretary of the Treasury could not help but win some tangential publicity for Mr. Connally's political allies here.

It was known that invitations had been extended to many of Mr. Connally's allies, former contributors to Lyndon B. Johnson's Presidential campaigns, stalwarts of the conservative wing of the state's Democratic party who helped win Mr. Connally three terms as Texas Governor, and a num-

ber of important Republican party officials as well.

The President's trip here represented his first visit to the home of a member of his Cabinet.

Mr. Connally has told newsmen that he and the President often talk about trends in American politics. While he says he plans to remain a Democrat, he has conceded that if the country were to be divided into two new parties along philosophical lines—Conservative and liberal—he would probably find himself on the same side with Mr. Nixon.

Political motives aside, many observers here interpreted Mr. Nixon's visit as in part a personal gesture of appreciation, if not affection. Mr. Connally has been one of Mr. Nixon's most eloquent spokesmen for the new economic policy and one of his most effective bargainers in the monetary councils of the world.

Beyond his narrower role at Treasury, Mr. Connally has provided the President with support and encouragement for his recent decisions to escalate the air war in Vietnam in response to enemy attacks.



Associated Press
THE SECRETARY'S GUESTS: President and Mrs. Nixon stand with John B. Connally and his wife on the porch of the Treasury Secretary's ranch home in Floresville, Tex.