

He May Switch to Republican Party

Connally's New Role a Mystery

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Washington

The only two people in Washington who know for sure what John B. Connally will be doing after he leaves the Treasury Department are President Nixon and Connally himself.

Key officials indicated only that the decision for Connally to step down in favor of George P. Shultz, director of the Office of Management and Budget, was made hastily (possibly within the preceding 24 hours).

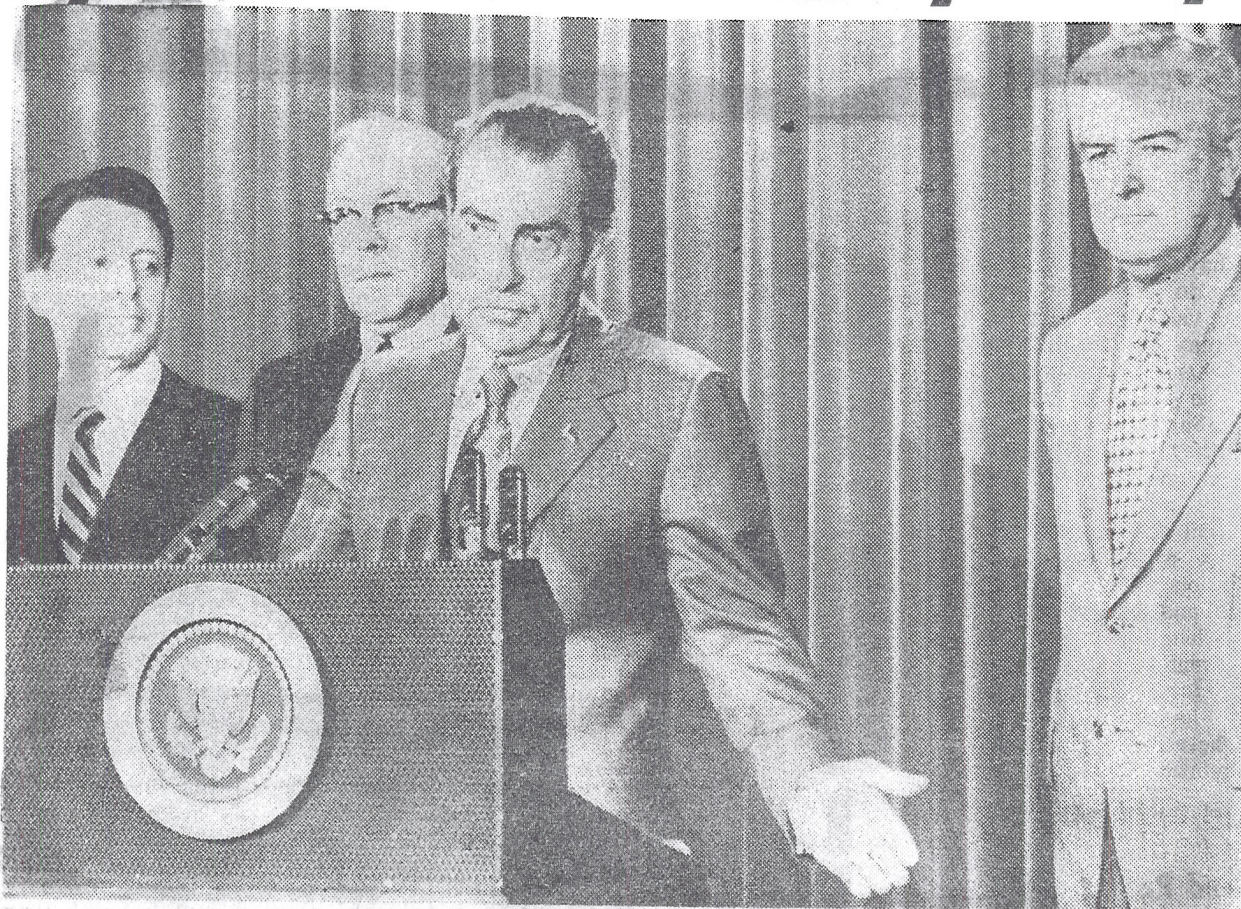
Mr. Nixon called his Cabinet together at 10 a.m. yesterday to give them the news. It caught all but Schultz unprepared and unaware. "We were all appropriately stunned," said one Cabinet officer. One or two important administration people outside the Cabinet were telephoned the news at about the same time.

And although the President said he and Connally "had a long discussion... several weeks ago" about Connally's successor, Shultz didn't learn about his promotion until about 2 p.m. Monday.

At that time, according to a White House source, Shultz appeared in Mr. Nixon's office for a routine meeting, with an agenda of various matters to take up.

But the President said that he had something "to take up" with Shultz. He offered him the job, saying that he and Connally had discussed it earlier in the day. Shultz accepted on the spot, whereupon the President sent for Connally, and the three had a general discussion about the Treasury assignment.

Later in the afternoon, Shultz brought assistant



President Nixon announced the resignation of Treasury Secretary Connally (right), as Caspar Weinberger (left) and George Shultz looked on.

OMB Director Caspar Weinberger into the President's office, where Weinberger learned for the first time about his new post as Shultz' successor.

One story, unconfirmed, linked the hasty decision with the attempted assassination of Governor George Wallace. According to this report, the memories of the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, when Connally (then Texas governor) was seriously wounded brought pressure from Mrs. Connally for a quick return to Texas.

Connally has been saying publicly and privately that he is tired after his 18 months service in Washington. In February, after his 58th birthday, he told reporters he was anxious to return

to private life. In at least one private conversation, he indicated he had lost his zest for the continuous round of appearances necessary on Capitol Hill.

But after a day of wrestling with all of the possible explanations for the move — and its timing — the development left this capital still groping for a real handle on

the story. The turn of events was almost incomprehensible at a time when Connally seemed to be at the zenith of his power not only as the economic mastermind of the administration, but a key foreign policy adviser ranking with Henry Kissinger.

Whether the future Nixon-Connally relationship will bring the vice presidential nomination to the Treasury

Secretary was still a matter of speculation, despite Connally's by this time stock reiteration that "I don't think that event will occur."

One of his close associates

theorized that Connally could now return to Texas, there change his political allegiance to the Republican party, and thus prove more acceptable to the conservative wing of the GOP which only reluctantly will be persuaded to give up Vice President Spiro Agnew.

Connally presumably would then undertake to organize for Mr. Nixon and the Republican party the scores of influential Texans, mostly Democrats, whom he invited to his Picoso ranch on April 30 to meet President and Mrs. Nixon.

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