

Connally to Everywhere

Former Secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally obviously relishes the reputation he once ascribed to himself of being "a sort of bully boy on the manicured playing fields of international finance." That he did, indeed, build such an image and that he enjoyed living up to it are only two of the reasons why he was the wrong man to send at this time on a trip to nearly a score of foreign countries to discuss international economic problems and to brief their governments on President Nixon's meetings in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Connally is widely regarded as the practitioner of an abrasive nationalism whose approach to international economic negotiations is based on the premise that blame for the trade and payments difficulties of the United States lies pretty largely on discrimination by others. It was especially insensitive to send a Texan who has oil billionaires as law clients to Venezuela, where President Caldera is under increasing pressure to assume greater control over the country's oil resources.

It is insensitive to send as this Administration's first Cabinet-level envoy to six American republics the man who last year urged a particularly punitive policy toward that area, remarking on one occasion, "We can afford to get tough with Latin America because we don't have any friends left there anyway." Mr. Connally also wants the United States Government to join forces with any American firm threatened with a foreign takeover—another sensitive point in all Latin-American countries.

Was this trip necessary? If so, why not send Secretary of State Rogers, surely better equipped to inform other governments on the Moscow talks than Mr. Connally? In choosing Mr. Connally, a man who makes no secret of his low regard for the State Department, the President further diminished the standing of Mr. Rogers and the department.

The suspicion lingers that this trip was arranged more to advance domestic political ends by continuing the build-up of Mr. Connally than to suit the requirements of United States foreign policy. Unfortunately, Mr. Connally's public attitudes command a constituency of super-patriots and protectionists, however badly they serve the long-run American interest.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler says that in addition to having "his own points to make," Mr. Connally intends to listen to the leaders on whom he will call. That, at least, would be a welcome change.