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John Connally, The Republican

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Houston

John B. Connally announced yesterday his formal affiliation with the Republican party, saying: "It is the instrumentality through which we can accomplish the greater good for this country."

The former Texas Democratic Governor gave his old party the back of his hand, stating: "I think it is fair to say that the Democratic Party has moved so far left that it has left behind the majority of Americans who occupy the great middle-ground of this country."

Connally also said that "regardless of past political history and traditions that many of us hold dear, I have reached a personal conclusion that my future activities should be within the framework of the Republican Party."

In a long-awaited news conference, Connally, 56, said the Republican Party in his opinion has moved from the right to the center in recent history and now "invited broader participation from people in all walks of life."

WATERGATE

On the Watergate episode, Connally said the American people should not lose sight of the larger problems that confront this country, but

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that Watergate was a "sordid mess, a silly, stupid illegal act . . ."

Asked also about the possibility of serving in Mr. Nixon's administration, possibly as a Secretary of Defense, Connally said he had not discussed the Watergate affair with Mr. Nixon, or a post in Mr. Nixon's administration and had not talked to the President for about three weeks except to inform him of his news conference yesterday and to com-

ment the President after his Monday night speech on the Watergate affair.

Connally's announcement was made in a small first-floor room in the First City National Bank building of Houston, surrounded by so many bankers, lawyers and friends that some members of the press were unable to get into the room.

His wife Idanell also said she was becoming a Republican.

Connally's conversion was seen by many political observers as the first step of an effort to win the 1976 Republican party presidential nomination.

POSSIBILITY

But he said, when asked about that possibility: "I don't seek any job, appointive or selective. I'm not a candidate for any job."

Connally served three two-year terms as governor as a Democrat. In the middle of his first term, he was seriously wounded by rifle shots while riding with the late President Kennedy in Dallas when Kennedy was assassinated.

Before running for governor, he had been Secretary of the Navy in the Kennedy administration.

Connally served as Mr. Nixon's secretary of the treasury from February, 1971 to June, 1972.

Liberal Democrats in Texas long have accused him of being more Republican than Democrat. He worked for several Republican presidential candidates while still the dominant Democrat in the state. His last effort in that direction was as national head of Democrats for Nixon.

PROBLEMS

Connally spent much of his time during the news conference talking about the political instability of the nation, and the problems facing it, and he defended Mr. Nixon's role in the Watergate affair.

Connally said he began to feel last year that "I could



AP Wirephoto

JOHN CONNALLY AS HE TOLD OF SWITCH
'Comfortable' with positions of the GOP

not in good consciousness support the leadership of the national Democratic Party. I don't think I ought to retire as a political activist in this country.

"I don't want to. I've been active all my political life. I am going to continue to do so. I think I have a duty and responsibility like any other American. Given that position and given the fact that during the last two years I have had a hand in fashioning the program of the Republican Party, notwithstanding that I was a Democrat at the time, I feel comfortable, and right in the positions that the Republican Party has taken.

"I just feel that the Republican Party is the instrumentality through which we can accomplish the greater good for this country," Connally said.

In Washington, President Nixon expressed pleasure that a man of Connally's "ability and competence" had now become a Republican.

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew also welcomed his potential 1976 presidential adversary into the fold.