



John B. Connally speaking in Houston yesterday.

## Connally, Joining G.O.P., Calls It More Responsive

By MARTIN WALDRON  
Special to The New York Times

HOUSTON, May 2—Former Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, who was Treasury Secretary during the first Nixon Administration and was a political disciple of the late President Johnson for many years, announced today, as forecast, that he had become a Republican.

Many politicians believe that this is the first step in a campaign by Mr. Connally to try to win the Republican Presidential nomination in 1976.

He said he had decided to leave the Democratic party because he thought the Republican party was more nearly responsive to the needs and thoughts of the people. He said he could not remain a Democrat and still take part in national affairs.

"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," he said, adding that

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the Republican party now occupies "the broad middle ground where we are going to have to find the solutions to the many problems we have."

Mr. Connally's conversion was greeted as bright news at the troubled White House and at the otherwise gloomy headquarters of the Republican National Committee in Washington.

National political observers regarded the announcement as further confirmation of Mr. Connally's intention to run for the Presidential nomination, and, its timing appeared carefully designed to impress party regulars, dispirited by the Watergate scandal, with their convert's dedication.

Vice President Agnew, who has held a commanding lead over other Republican Presidential contenders, in opinion polls of party members called Mr. Connally "a talented and personal man, an effective and articulate spokesman for traditional American values. I know that all Republicans will join me in welcoming Mr. Connally aboard."

The silver-haired Texan, who counts many of the state's rich oil men as his supporters and friends, said, "I seek no office, political or appointive."

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, Mr. Connally dismissed the current Watergate scandal as a "silly, stupid, illegal act" whose impact on the 1974 and 1976 elections was probably being overestimated.

"I think that by '74 the people will have an opportunity to put into better perspective what this incident was," Mr. Connally said. "One of the things we need to put into perspective was that [Watergate] was an act of individuals. The Republican party didn't do it."

**Timing Held Coincidental**  
Alluding to speculation that he and President Nixon had timed his conversion to Republicanism to gather praise from party regulars stinging from the Watergate criticism, Mr. Connally said the timing was coincidental and said he had talked to the President only three times in the last three weeks.

"I called him this morning and told him of what I was going to do," Mr. Connally said. "I called him the other night after his speech just to commend him. But I have not discussed my political future, and I did not discuss this press conference with him before I announced it."

Mr. Connally said he also conversed at some length with the President three weeks ago.

Changing political parties in Texas is quite simple. Voters do not register by parties, so a voter becomes a full-fledged

Republican or Democrat by voting in a party's primary. Mr. Connally voted in the Democratic primary last year.

Mr. 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 President Kennedy in Dallas when Mr. Kennedy was assassinated.

Before running for Governor, he was Secretary of the Navy in the Kennedy Administration. He served in the Nixon Administration as Treasury Secretary at a time of monetary crisis, a crisis that he said today is still with the nation.

"We ought not to let ourselves become so enmeshed in Watergate that we forget the fact that we have great problems in restructuring the monetary system of the world," he said and continued:

"We have great problems in dealing with international trade matters. We have great problems in bringing about fiscal responsibility. We need all the strength of this nation, combined strength on a nonpartisan basis, to fight inflation that plagues the nation.

"We must concern ourselves with the energy crisis which we are in the midst of, and which is going to become worse in this country. All of these things, we have to deal with and we ought to deal with them in the most objective and the most intelligent and the most effective way we can, and it is toward that purpose that I am going to direct my efforts."

Last fall, Mr. Connally headed a national Democrats for Nixon Committee, which raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign. Mr. Connally said he "hoped" that none of this money went to pay for Watergate.

"Watergate was long over and done with before Democrats for Nixon were even organized," he said.

Mr. Connally said he considered political spying and espionage carried out by supporters of President Nixon to be a "very reprehensible thing." He continued:

"I feel very strongly about Watergate. I think too much of it goes on in this country in and out of Government. And I think it ought to be stopped. And I feel more strongly about it than any member of the press here. I'm convinced of that. I think this illegal act and those who participated in it ought to be punished for it, but I don't think we ought to let it blind us to the realization that we have great problems in this country.

"And I don't think that incident, however reprehensible, ought to be used as a shield against what the President has done that has been so much in the interest of this country.

"I think the President has done an incredibly effective job in dealing with the foreign relations of this country and has shown great courage in

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dealing with our domestic problems."

Mr. Connally said that Watergate "has done great damage to the political processes of this country and those who were responsible for it must be punished, no question about that."

He said he did not see anything wrong with having an outside prosecutor to investigate the Watergate incident if it should prove to be necessary.

"The President clearly said that Elliot Richardson has that authority, and if he feels that it can best serve the country to have someone brought in from the outside, I think Elliot Richardson will do it," he said.

Mr. Connally said he did not know if his changing parties would have any effect on Texas politics, adding that if anyone would follow him, he had not heard about it.

#### BRIEF STATEMENT

... can has an obligation to participate in our political system. This I have done all of my adult life and shall continue to do.

Regardless of past political history and traditions that many of us hold dear, I have reached the personal conclusion that my future activities should be within the framework of the Republican party.

In recent history it is the Republican party which has invited broader participation from people in all walks of life; which has worked more effectively for economic growth and fiscal responsibility; which has sought opportunity for all without the burden of bigger government and higher taxes; and which stands for expanded international trade, more realistic monetary policies and responsible American leadership in the free world.

I believe that in our time the Republican party best represents the broad views of most Americans whatever their former political affiliation. I believe that it can best provide the strength and stability to unite our people to deal effectively with our problems. I know that it now best represents my own personal convictions.

Accordingly, I am today announcing my decision to affiliate with the Republican party, and make any contribution I can to help it meet the needs and aspirations of all Americans.

#### Nixon Is Pleased

WASHINGTON, May 2 (UPI) — President Nixon expressed pleasure today that a man of the "ability and competence" of John B. Connally had become a Republican.

#### Bush Discerns Trend

Special to The New York Times  
WASHINGTON, May 2 — George Bush, a fellow Texan, said today: "As chairman of

the Republican National Committee, I welcome John Connally's decision. It stands as clear evidence that the Republican party is moving forward. I have said all along that John Connally and millions others like him can no longer identify with the national Dem-

ocratic party. The party has deserted them. This move today confirms that the new Republican majority we have been talking about in this country is happening. John Connally is strong and able — he is welcome. I predict many many more will follow him into the

rankings of the G.O.P." Representative Bob Eckhardt, a Texas Democrat, observed, "Mr. Connally is like a man who left his hat in the airplane. He's just going back to where he was sitting all the time, and he's meeting a crowd going the other way."