

Connally: High Court Is Not Always Supreme

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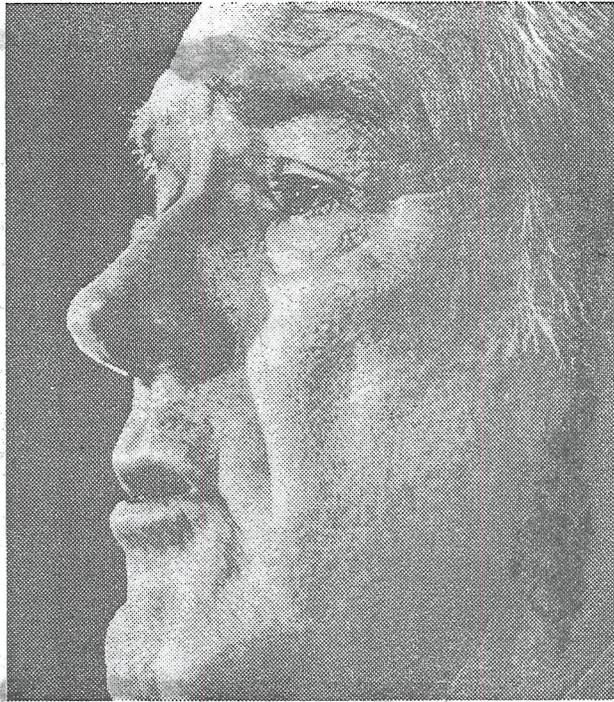
Former Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, making his Washington debut as a Republican presidential possibility, said last night that President Nixon could well be justified in ignoring any Supreme Court decision to turn over the Watergate tapes.

"We're leading ourselves into believing the Supreme Court is the ultimate arbiter of all disputes," Connally said, "and I don't believe it. I think there are times when the President of the United States would be right in not obeying a decision of the Supreme Court."

Connally discussed Watergate and the GOP future with newsmen before taking the star turn as the guest of honor at a reception his new comrades in the Texas Republican Party gave for the assembled members of the Republican National Committee.

Last night's stop was part of a cross-country speaking tour which Connally, a former Lyndon Johnson protege who switched to the Republican Party last May, acknowledge is designed in part to test his prospects for the 1976 nomination.

Telling reporters he would "stipulate"



By Ken Feil—The Washington Post

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John Connally: "... I might ask for a wiretap ..."

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that the question was on his mind, he said he would not decide until 1975 whether to make the race. So far, he said, his reception has been "excellent," but that "does not indicate a complete unanimity of acceptance."

In his press conference, Connally disowned such past administration decisions as the scrapping of Phase II economic controls and the 1972 wheat sale to Russia, but he came down foursquare behind the President on the question of the Watergate tapes.

While Mr. Nixon himself has said he would obey a "definitive" Supreme Court decision, without defining the term, Connally indicated he thought the President might be in his rights to ignore any ruling.

Telling newsmen he did not want to discuss the merits of the tapes controversy, he said it was wrong, in his view, to believe that the judiciary is necessarily supreme in such a case. "If there is merit in the structure of this government, with three co-equal branches," he said, it is "sure" that there are times when a President could ignore an adverse Supreme Court ruling.

Connally also backed Mr. Nixon's right to conduct wiretaps for national security, al-

though he said he found them distasteful himself. He said he had no knowledge, as Secretary of Treasury in part of Mr. Nixon's first term, that Secret Service agents, who were in his department, had tapped the telephone of Mr. Nixon's brother, Donald.

"If I were President," he said, "I can foresee a time when I might ask for a wiretap on someone.... When it's a question of the security of the nation and the right of the individual, the legal rights of the individual must give way."

Nonetheless, Connally said, he believes the main difference between his old party and his new one is that "the

preservation of personal, human liberties is given greater hope under a Republican administration."

Connally declined to discuss the current investigation of Vice President Agnew, but said he had admired Agnew's "strength of conviction" since the days when they were both governors.

The Texan said the Watergate affair had left "neither party... in good shape," but said that polls he has seen show "the Republicans have not been hurt any more than the Democrats. Only 44 per cent of the people will admit they belong to either party, so there's a challenge for both

parties to try to get them back."

Connally, who was an architect of the Phase I wage-price freeze in 1971, said the decision to end Phase II controls last January (after he had left the Administration) "was a m's'ake."

He said the best advice he has now is that "the faster we can get away from (the remaining) controls, the better."

He said he agreed with his successor in Treasury, George P. Shultz, that the Russian wheat deal looked better at the time it was made than it does in retrospect.

"That's life," said Connally. "I've sold things I wish I'd held onto."