

Report Connally

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post

Washington

President Nixon came very close to nominating John B. Connally, former governor of Texas and former secretary of the treasury, to be vice president but was discouraged by Connally himself.

The Texan, a one-time protege of the late President Johnson, was the only one of

five persons seriously considered for the nomination who was told in advance that the choice would be House minority leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, it was learned from sources in and out of the government.

Mr. Nixon spoke to none of the potential candidates personally before deciding on Ford, but he instructed General Alexander M. Haig Jr., White House chief of staff, to talk by telephone to Connally both Thursday and Friday.

In announcing Friday noon that Mr. Nixon had made his decision, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said that the President had narrowed his list of possible nominees to five men when he flew to Camp David, Md., Thursday afternoon.

MEN

Actually, there were only four men on the list when the President went to Camp David, for one of them, Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, had been eliminated by both Richardson and the President. Richardson's name had figured prominently in the President's consideration at an earlier stage.

The four remaining on the list Thursday, 24 hours after Spiro T. Agnew resigned, were Ford, Connally, Gover-

nor Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York and Governor Ronald Reagan of California.

There had been many other suggestions from party leaders, members of the cabinet and members of Congress, but Mr. Nixon had been thinking about the problem for some time and had narrowed the list to the four.

STRONG

When Haig informed Connally on Thursday that he had very strong support for the nomination, Connally raised his first objections.

The Texan discussed the pros and cons at some length and referred to the strong opposition that had been expressed to his nomination from both Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill.

Some congressional Democrats were convinced that they had the votes to block his confirmation should Mr. Nixon submit the Texan's name to succeed Agnew, a view not shared by the White House.

The President and others in the administration were convinced that any responsible nominee would be confirmed because members of congress would realize that the voters wanted the issue resolved quickly so that there would be a Vice President in office.

There was particularly vigorous opposition to Connally because he had changed parties this year, because he was regarded as a formidable candidate for president in 1977, and because neither Republicans nor Democrats wanted Mr. Nixon to try to dictate the name of his successor.

"Connally dodged a bullet," one person fully informed as to Connally's thinking said. By dodging a bullet now, he remains a

'Dodged' Job

formidable potential candidate for president in 1976 without having gone through a wounding confirmation fight.

Also, if Mr. Nixon's stock continues to fall anyone with his endorsement might be hurt, and the scars of a bruising confirmation battle might have been permanent.

After Mr. Nixon returned from Camp David early Friday, he informed his staff that he had made a decision and he scheduled separate

meetings with Ford and senate minority leader Hugh Scott (Rep-Pa.)

Mr. Nixon did not tell Scott whom he had decided upon and he only told Ford that he was under consideration and that the person to be nominated would receive a telephone call from Haig.

Ford was at his home home when Haig telephoned the news Friday, an hour and a half before the Nixon announcement in the East Room.