

# Connally Bribe Trial



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ONLY John Connally would try to turn a bribery trial into a political asset. He is known on the political hustings as the fastest jaw in the west. With characteristic bluff, Big John has contended that his integrity has now been proven in court.

His supporters, picking up the line, have published a brochure declaring: "Certainly, no other presidential contender can boast an acquittal for such serious charges."

But the jury, which found Connally innocent of taking a bribe, did not exactly pronounce him pure as the driven snow. We have tried to find out what the jury really thought of Big John.

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WE HAVE MANAGED to locate most of the jurors. Because Connally has tried to make more of the acquittal than they intended, several of them spoke to us about what happened inside the jury room. All except foreman Dennis O'Toole asked us to withhold their names.

It took them more than five hours to agree upon Connally's innocence. They sat around a rectangular table in a blank, windowless room. One by one, the jurors expressed their views.

Then they took the first vote. Only one juror, a black man, felt Connally was guilty. A few had doubts. A slight majority voted for acquittal.

In the discussions that followed,

several jurors wanted to review the financial testimony. They found it confusing. They also had trouble understanding the White House tapes. These contain a damning conversation between Connally and Richard Nixon on milk prices.

Connally told Nixon that the dairy men were "amassing an enormous amount of money that they're going to put into political activity, very frankly."

The blunt Texan, then Nixon's treasury secretary, advised Nixon to grant the dairymen a price increase. "If you don't," said Connally, "you've cost yourself some money."

Later he stressed again: "You're in this for everything you can get out of it."

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FOREMAN O'TOOLE, summarizing his impression, told us he heard "a lot of Texas wheeling and dealing." Some of the undecided jurors also expressed concern about the cozy relationship between Connally and the milk producers.

It was probably evangelist Billy Graham, according to jury sources, who helped Connally the most. The evangelist's testimony, as a character witness for Connally, impressed some of the jurors deeply.

After the trial was over, O'Toole explained: "Our verdict meant not that we had found necessarily that John Connally was innocent but, rather, not guilty based on the case presented to us."