

Connally Deluged at Convention With Questions About Integrity

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KANSAS CITY, Aug. 15—John S. Connally made himself a conspicuous and perhaps powerful presence at the Republican National Convention today, but in his first crowded news conference he was showered with questions about his past and his integrity.

The tenor of the session might confirm the fears of some Republicans that the conservative appeal and political flair of the former Secretary of the Treasury and Texas Governor would be offset by the controversy he may engender if chosen as a running mate by President Ford.

Mr. Connally was subjected to questions at a new conference this afternoon that nearly passed the bounds of usual American political journalism. At one point he was asked if he had "ever been offered, accepted or solicited a bribe." "Absolutely not," he said in a firm, clear voice.

Mr. Connally, who was acquitted by a Federal court jury of charges of impropriety involving price increases sought by a milk-producing association, is being considered by President Ford as one of a list of several Vice-Presidential possibilities. Mr. Connally confirmed today that he had received a questionnaire about his background prepared by the White House staff.

The President, in an interview with the Chicago Tribune, said that he was still considering Mr. Connally, but added, "I would hope that my nominee

would strengthen the party and prevent any divisiveness within the party ranks."

Mr. Connally is a vivid personality who is bound to cause some divisiveness within the Ford camp no matter what course the President takes, since some Southern conservatives will be disenchanted if he is not chosen and some Northern liberals may be if he is.

While it is unclear whether Mr. Ford wants Mr. Connally to share the ticket, it is clear that he wants his help. Mr. Connally met this morning with James Baker, the chief Ford delegate hunter, and William Timmons, the Ford political director, who asked Mr. Connally to begin using his influence among selected groups of uncommitted delegates on the President's behalf.

Mr. Connally has also been asked to speak to the convention on Tuesday night and is deep in preparations for the speech.

Mr. Connally, a former Democrat who first joined the Nixon Administration and formally became a Republican in 1973, has opened a headquarters in a suite on the fifth floor of a downtown hotel with a busy staff of old political lieutenants and friends. He said that the staff was for the "convenience" of journalists and that his main interest in coming here was to discuss how he could best help elect Republican Congressional candidates in the fall election.