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JULY 27, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
JOHN CONNALLY

THE WEST WING LOBBY ENTRANCE

3:50 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

I have a very old and very good friend. I have known John Connally since 1961, when he was Secretary of the Navy and I was on the Mahon subcommittee. He was an outstanding Secretary of the Navy. I followed his political career as Governor of the State of Texas for three terms. He came down to be Secretary of the Treasury.

I have had a number of opportunities to work with him as the Minority Leader of the Republican Party in the House of Representatives. Over the years John Connally and I have not only had a professional relationship in a political sense but we have also been close personal friends.

We have had a number of meetings over the last two years, and we had a meeting this afternoon that followed in the natural course of events.

He was in town, and I asked him to stop by.

I think Governor Connally has an announcement that may be of some interest to you, and I want to thank him for what I think he is going to say.

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Mr. President, you don't know exactly what I am going to say because I am not sure I do myself, except I came to tell the President that notwithstanding my neutrality in the Presidential primaries all spring, I think the time has now come when no useful purpose has been served by my maintaining that position but rather, the best interests of the country will be served by my stating my unequivocal position that I do support President Ford for the nomination and will support him in the election with every resource that I have and all the ability that I have.

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I am delighted to make that announcement and I just hope that I can be helpful to him in securing the nomination and I certainly hope that I can contribute something as a Republican in the effort to win the Presidency in November and to capture additional seats in the Congress in both the House and the Senate.

QUESTION: How about getting on the ticket?

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: That subject was not discussed today. I do not know what the President proposes with respect to his running mate. He has not told me. He has not hinted who it might be. I have not asked him, nor will I ask him.

QUESTION: Can we ask you, Mr. President, have you made up your mind?

QUESTION: Did Mr. Reagan's announcement yesterday have anything to do with your announcement today?

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Yes, Governor Reagan's announcement yesterday does have something to do with my announcement today, only in the sense that I think it is quite clear that as between the two men it is quite clear now that the President is unmistakably the better choice, not only for the party but for the country, and so his announcement yesterday certainly does have something to do with my statement today.

QUESTION: Mr. President, would you like to have the Governor on the ticket with you as a Vice Presidential candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: I said repeatedly that I don't exclude any potential Republicans as my Vice Presidential running mate. I have indicated my long association and great respect for Governor Connally, but I think it is premature to make any comment because there are others, of course, that I will talk to as I have talked to Governor Connally on this occasion.

QUESTION: But his announcement here today certainly does not hurt his chances.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let the future speak for itself.

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: May I add to that my statement here today has nothing to do with the chances -- good, bad or indifferent -- so far as I am concerned. I am doing this because I think I should do it. I think the time has come when I think we ought to try to end this nomination as quickly as we possibly can, and I think it should be ended with President Ford being the nominee. The sooner that can be made clear, the better it is for the party and for the country.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 3:56 P.M. EDT)