

American Bar ^{F Post} Debate's Nixon ^{8/12/74}

HONOLULU (AP) — Some of the nation's leading legal figures disagreed Sunday about whether Richard M. Nixon should be prosecuted for alleged Watergate crimes.

It was uncertain, on the eve of the 97th annual convention of the American Bar Association, whether the issue would come up for formal debate.

In pre-convention discussions, there were conflicting opinions on whether Nixon had been punished enough by becoming the first president to resign the office.

Former Atty. Gen. Elliot Richardson opposed criminal prosecution.

"I think that as a matter of discretion he should not be prosecuted and I hope that an understanding to that effect could be accomplished," Richardson said.

Richardson gave up the attorney general's post Oct. 20 rather than follow Nixon's orders to fire then-Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox.

R. Sargent Shriver, the 1972 Democratic vice presidential nominee, opposed immunity from criminal prosecution.

"The President is under the law like everyone else," said Shriver. "And I think he's responsible for his actions just as any grownup is responsible."

Another convention speaker, Sen. Sam Ervin, D-N.C., said the question is entirely up to the office of Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski. Ervin was chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee.

Smith said the question of disbarring Nixon should be raised only if the former president decides to return to law practice.

The bars of New York and California both have launched preliminary investigations to determine whether Nixon should be banned from practicing law again.

Last year Nixon said he had no plans to return to his law practice after leaving the White House.