

Watergate Suits Seen Near Out-of-Court Settlements

\$525,000 Mentioned

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The White House is moving on at least two fronts to settle—out of court—lawsuits against the Committee to Re-elect the President over the Watergate break-in and campaign financing practices. The Washington Post learned last night.

Conversations already have been held between Kenneth Wells Parkinson, lawyer for the committee and Sheldon S. Cohen, general counsel for the Democratic National Committee, concerning a possible out-of-court settlement of a Democratic suit seeking \$3.2 million in damages.

In addition, Maurice H. Stans, finance chairman of the Committee to Re-elect the President, has a 4 p.m. appointment today to talk to Mitchell Rogovin, lawyer for Common Cause, which has filed a suit demanding disclosure of early campaign contributions to the committee, estimated to be more than \$10 million.

Rogovin said last night that Stans had telephoned John Gardner, head of Common Cause, the so-called citizen's lobby, last week, requesting the meeting. Rogovin said

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he surmised a settlement offer would be the subject of Stans' visit.

According to Democratic sources, the Republicans have offered to pay \$525,000 to dispose of the Democratic suit, which charges that the President's re-election committee conspired to violate the civil rights of then Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien and other Democratic officials.

Cohen said yesterday that while no definite proposal has been made, "we have had chats" with the Republicans and that Parkinson "would like to settle the case very much."

Parkinson said he would have no comment, but he emphasized that the civil

suit brought by the Democrats is a class action that could not be settled without attendant publicity.

"If any compromise should come about, and I'm not saying that it will," Parkinson said, "it would have to have court approval."

In a related development, The Washington Post learned last night that Spencer Oliver, the Democratic National Committee official whose telephone was tapped in the Watergate affair and who is a principal plaintiff in the Democratic suit, has been fired by Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss.

Oliver is known to be opposed to any settlement of the case, but it is not known whether this position had anything to do with his firing. Other Democratic sources said Oliver's differences with Strauss stem from Strauss' belief that Oliver opposed his election as chairman last December, long before any discussion of a possible settlement.

The Republicans' explorations of settlements on the Democratic and Common Cause cases came on the same day President Nixon disclosed a breakthrough in the logjam over testimony by White House aides before a Senate committee investigating the Watergate affair and before a federal grand jury.

The moves are seen by leading Democrats as part of a comprehensive strategy to deal with the Watergate affair, for which Mr. Nixon has been taking increasing heat from Republicans on Capitol Hill and around the

country, and from voters in public-opinion surveys.

In the Democratic suit, the Democrats are to begin taking depositions today at Cohen's law offices from Frederick LaRue, a former White House counsel and special assistant at the re-election committee, and J. Glenn Sedam Jr., formerly general counsel at the committee.

Cohen said he has consistently invited the committee attorneys "to offer money" if they want to settle the case, but that the talks have not reached the point of a concrete proposal for his clients to consider.

Asked about a report that a settlement of more than \$500,000 had been discussed, but as far as the parties are concerned, there's nothing."

In the Common Cause suit, the organization's lawyers said portions of depositions taken in its case against the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President would be made public within the next two weeks.

Oliver's dismissal was demanded by Strauss a week ago in a stormy meeting with State Chairman including Robert Vance of Alabama, chairman of the Democratic State Chairmen's Association, of which Oliver has been executive director.

Vance confirmed in a telephone interview last night that Strauss had said Oliver would have to go. Despite a strong defense of him by the state chairmen, he said, Strauss' decision would stand.

Though Oliver worked for the state chairmen's association, his salary was paid by

the Democratic National Committee. It is believed he is being kept on the payroll for an indefinite time.

According to other Democratic sources, Strauss demanded Oliver's resignation last January so he could put a man of his own choosing in the job. Oliver submitted

his resignation last month at a meeting of the state chairmen in Las Vegas, but they passed a resolution asking him to stay on.