

Bar Opposes Pre-Trial Pardons For Others in Watergate Case

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 20—The American Bar Association called on President Ford today not to issue any more Federal pardons before criminal defendants have been tried and convicted, except under "extraordinary circumstances."

In an unusually blunt policy statement provoked by Mr. Ford's blanket pardon of former President Richard M. Nixon on Sept. 8, the association's Board of Governors urged that no further pardons be granted Watergate participants "until appropriate judicial processes have been followed."

The resolution was made public by bar association officials in Chicago today. It said the association recognized that the Nixon pardon "could involve considerations not present in other cases."

Acknowledging that the President's action in the Nixon case was, for all practical purposes, uncorrectable, the A.B.A. concentrated its fire on attempting to dissuade the President from any similar action with respect to the Watergate cover-up defendants before their trial has been completed.

'Erosion' of Respect Feared

"The American Bar Association is committed to the fair, just and impartial application and enforcement of the law," the policy statement read.

"In order to avoid the possible erosion of public respect for the law, the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association recommends that, in the absence of extraordinary circumstances involving public interests of great magnitude, the pardon power should not be exercised with respect to any individual until appropriate judicial processes have been followed."

For the first time in a Watergate policy statement, the A.B.A. mentioned Mr. Nixon by name, saying it was "concerned

with public reaction resulting from the pardon granted to former President Nixon" and that "the pardon of former President Nixon could involve considerations not present in other cases."

The A.B.A. has been sensitive for the last year about the number of lawyers implicated in the Watergate scandals and the resulting potential impact on public confidence in the legal profession.

Some leaders in the generally conservative organization have also been pressing for the association to respond rapidly and positively to news events that place lawyers and judges in something less than a flattering light.

Special Meeting Held

As a result, James D. Fellers, the association president, called the 22-member Board of Governors into special session four days after the Nixon pardon had been issued to review, according to a spokesman, "the history, legality, ramifications and further implications" of Mr. Ford's action.

After the discussion, a committee was assigned to draft a policy statement, and it was cleared with the Board of Governors by telephone end of week. The board sets policy for the association between semi-annual meetings of the 340-member House of Delegates.

A month ago in Honolulu, the House of Delegates approved unanimously a resolution designed to discourage any grant of immunity to Mr. Nixon, who had resigned just a week before, on the basis of the importance of his former office.

Without any debate, the lawyers voted in support of "fair, just and impartial application of the law, regardless of the position or status of any individual alleged to have violated the law." The resolution did not mention Mr. Nixon by name.