

Bar Won't Drop Nixon Probe

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If President Nixon's resignation from the State Bar is accepted by the state Supreme Court, it will have the same effect on his legal future as if he had been disbarred, officials said yesterday.

The disclosure came after several angry delegates to the State Bar convention circulated a petition demanding that the investigation of Mr. Nixon by the Bar be completed "now while the truth is still within its grasp."

There had been fears that the former President's intent to quit practicing law, announced last Monday, would close the investigation that began more than a year ago. This will not happen.

Mark Robinson, a member of the bar's Board of Governors told an informal session yesterday morning that if the board accepts Mr. Nixon's resignation, the state Supreme Court will be "advised that disciplinary proceedings are pending" against the ex-President.

"He will be in the same position as if he had been disbarred," Robinson said. "If he wants to re-apply for membership in the bar, he'll have to wait five years and then go before a hearing board" to discuss whether or not he should be readmitted to the practice of law.

Other bar officials said the investigation of Mr. Nixon is "still going on" and noted that even if the Nixon resignation is accepted by the court, and "there are still loose ends to tie up, we'll keep going. The only thing we couldn't do is bring him in for questioning."

It was learned that the investigation of Mr. Nixon and five other California lawyers implicated in the Watergate

scandal has consumed \$150,000 of the annual \$1.2 million that is allotted to disciplinary investigations. More than 2000 man-hours were devoted to the investigation, officials said, tying up a staff of two full-time attorneys and several research assistants.

Much of the material was understood to have come from earlier investigations conducted by the Senate Watergate Committee and the staff of the special Watergate prosecutor.

Many of the investigation documents will be filed with the state Supreme Court, one official said, along with Mr. Nixon's letter of resignation.

In response to rumors that a deal had been arranged between Mr. Nixon's attorneys and the State Bar that would curtail the investigation, Robinson sharply replied: "The State Bar does not engage in plea bargaining. Mr. Nixon is being treated the same as any other lawyer in California."

It was later learned that Mr. Nixon's lawyer, Dean Butler, had approached at least two bar governors as early as last Sunday afternoon, several hours after the controversial pardon was announced, to tell them Mr. Nixon wanted to resign from the bar.

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Other officials were later approached by Butler to discuss what he later said was "the proper procedure and timing" to announce the resignation.

Butler said yesterday he had urged Mr. Nixon to submit his resignation sooner — "it could have been submitted last week," he said — but there were "other priorities" on the former President's mind, not the least of which were the negotiations leading up to the pardon by President Ford.