

Demo Chief's Hope of A Watergate Bonanza

By William Thomas

A cheerful Robert Strauss, chairman of the no longer beleaguered Democratic party, explained here yesterday why he is not about to settle the party's suit against the Republicans over Watergate.

"The Republicans have made more than a \$4.6 million commitment out of the funds of the Committee to Re-Elect the President towards Congressional races in 1974.

"We've got all that money tied up by our lawsuit," he said with a twinkle. "I'm determined we go to trial!" No matter how long he has to wait, he implied.

The trial, he said, would probably be in the fall and the Democrats could net \$4 million out of it from Republican coffers.

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Previously the Republicans had offered to settle out of court for more than \$500,000 but Strauss said there had been "no more discussion" about that.

The optimism of the party was clearly exhibited at a \$100-a-plate luncheon at Trader Vic's which was jammed with 160 persons



ROBERT STRAUSS
Party chairman

from almost every faction of the local Democratic party.

Strauss, a conservative Texas Democrat, and Assemblyman, John Burton, the liberal California chairman of the party, verbally embraced each other.

But the national chairman was very careful to caution against undue optimism because of Watergate.

"If the Democrats are going to rely on Watergate to elect their candidates they are going to be disappointed," he observed.

Rather, he said, the Democrats should concentrate on issues that are important to the lives of the American people.

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Then he got back on Watergate, and said the Nixon administration had claimed all politicians do similar things.

"This is an outrage," he said, "everybody doesn't do it."

He said the alibi was a "fraud . . . attempt to tranquilize . . . to put to sleep the people's sense of judgment and morality."

Watergate, he added, is a "blasphemy" against 200 years of American history.

Some of Strauss' concern over the issue could very well stem from the reduced flow of big contributions to the Democratic party since Watergate.

At an impromptu press conference he noted that the revelations of Republican safes overflowing with cash had apparently inhibited wealthy Democrats too.

But he said the flow of small contributions "has been very good."

"Watergate," he added, "tends to hurt the whole process."