

Prosecution May Be Debated at ABA Meeting

Lawyers Disagree on Nixon Immunity

By Bill Stall

HONOLULU, Aug. 11 (AP) —Some of the nation's leading legal figures disagreed today 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 Mr. Nixon had been punished enough by becoming the first President to resign the office.

Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson opposes criminal prosecution of Mr. Nixon: "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 gave up the Attorney General's post last Oct. 20 rather than follow Mr. Nixon's orders to fire then-Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.

R. Sargent Shriver, the 1972 Democratic vice presidential nominee, opposes any immunity from criminal prosecution for Mr. Nixon.

"The President is under the law like everyone else," said Shriver, who will conduct a symposium on legal services Monday. "And I think he's responsible for his actions just as any grownup is responsible."

Another convention speaker, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), said the question is entirely up to the office of Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski, who succeeded Cox last fall. Ervin was chairman

of the Senate Watergate committee.

The final reaction last week of ABA President Chesterfield Smith of Lakeland, Fla., was: "No man is above the law. Judgments should be made on the merits of Mr. Nixon's case just like anyone else."

Smith said the question of disbaring Mr. Nixon should be raised only if the former President decides to return to law practice.

The bars of New York and California have begun preliminary investigations to determine whether Mr. Nixon should be banned from practicing law again. Last year Mr. Nixon said he had no plans to return to his law practice af-

ter leaving the White House.

The convention agenda was compiled before Mr. Nixon's resignation last week, but a number of scheduled sessions deal with Watergate and related topics.

Ervin will participate in a panel Wednesday on "Watergate: The Public Lawyer and the Bar." Another panelist will be U.S. Attorney George Beall of Baltimore, who prosecuted former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew.

Cox will address a luncheon immediately following the panel.

The subject of discipline of lawyers and judges will be discussed Tuesday. The speakers include Chief Justice Donald

R. Wright of the California Supreme Court.

An estimated 6,000 of the association's 185,000 members are expected to attend the week-long session.

President Ford and Chief Justice Warren Burger had been scheduled to address the convention, but canceled.

James D. Fellers of Oklahoma City will become the new ABA president Friday. He will be succeeded as president-elect by Lawrence E. Walsh of New York City. Walsh is a former deputy U.S. attorney general and federal judge and served as deputy chief of the U.S. delegation to the Paris peace talks in 1969.