

GOP Offers To Settle Demo Suit

SETTLE

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U.P. & A.P.

Washington

The Committee for the Re-election of the President has offered the Democratic National Committee \$525,000 to settle out of court the Democrat's \$6.4 million civil suit over the Watergate bugging and burglary, it was learned last night.

Democratic National Chairman Robert Strauss confirmed that an offer had been made and he would not deny the amount.

Strauss said the National Committee is considering the offer but will make no decision until the public investigation into the Watergate affair gets further along.

Officials of the Nixon campaign had counter-sued for a total of \$7.5 million. The Committee for the Re-Election of the President reportedly has offered to drop its own suits.

Strauss said "serious discussions" about an out-of-court settlement had been going on for months and that "it has become intense in the past several weeks.

"We feel the suit is the match that lit the fire. We

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could not settle until we see what goes on in the public inquiry and that a settlement would not impede the scope of the inquiry."

By "match" Strauss meant the suit was a means of sustaining attention and developing public information on the Watergate case during the many months it took the Justice Department to prosecute seven Watergate conspirators on criminal charges.

The Democrats' suit initially charged the Committee for the Re-Election of the President and certain committee officials and national GOP officials with damaging the Democrats by organized trespassing and invasion of privacy at their Watergate national headquarters.

The suit was amended and enlarged a number of times to add more defendants, including some with White House links, and other charges, including conspiracy to disrupt Democratic presidential campaign activities.

Countersuits filed against the Democrats accused them of using their suit to harass the Nixon committee and of libeling former commerce secretary Maurice Stans, the chief Nixon fund raiser.

In addition, Stans has an 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 organized citizen's lobby, last week requesting the meeting. Rogovin said he surmised a settlement offer would be the subject of Stans' visit.