

State Bar Favors Probe Of Lawyers in Watergate

By Robert Bartlett
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Anaheim

The State Bar's Conference of Delegates yesterday overwhelmingly endorsed a bar investigation of six California lawyers — among them President Nixon—allegedly involved in the Watergate scandal.

The action ended a 90-minute parliamentary hassle during the 46th annual State Bar convention here.

The Bar's 15-member Board of Governors already has instigated "informal inquiries" into the conduct of the six.

PRACTICE

Conceivably, each could lose his license to practice law in California, even if not convicted of a crime.

The State Bar's inquiry is focusing upon President Nixon; Herbert Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's lawyer; and four other California attorneys whose names have emerged at the Watergate hearings: Robert Mardian, John Ehrlichman, Donald Segretti and Dwight Chapin.

YEAR

Leonard Janofsky, president of the State Bar, told a press conference that any disciplinary action against these California lawyers would probably be at least a year away.

The reason: It costs far less for the Bar to wait until a California lawyer is convicted of a felony, then simply ask a State Supreme Court to suspend or disbar him, than for the State Bar to do its own investigating and to hold disciplinary hearings.

Since the convention opened at the Disneyland Hotel here Monday, many delegates have privately expressed dismay at increasing distrust of the legal profession, capped by TV coverage of the Senate Watergate hearings.

RESOLUTION

Yesterday morning, the

Equality With Men At Last

San Marino

Women in this tiny republic — the world's smallest and oldest — have at last won full legal equality with men.

After a 28 to 1 vote in Parliament Monday night, women will be eligible for all government posts and will be able to sit in Parliament. There were 18 abstentions.

Women in the 23-square-mile republic, which is situated in central Italy, were granted the vote in 1959.

Reuters

National Lawyers Guild's Southern California delegation offered a resolution condemning "all proven illegal conduct" of government officials involved in the Watergate burglary and subsequent coverup.

Dean S. Butler of Los Angeles, chairman of the conference, ruled the move out of order, because it had not been submitted by April 1, the deadline for most convention resolutions.

San Francisco attorney Robert Wallach complained that "devious parliamentary rules" were being used to prevent discussion "of an issue of grave public concern."

Parliamentarian Bruce F. Bunker backed up the chairman, and the conference moved on, briefly, to other matters.

LAWYER

But another San Francisco lawyer, James Brosnahan, offered a resolution expressing "appreciation for the efforts of the Board of Governors to take all appropriate investigatory steps, against those members of the California Bar found to have

participated in unlawful and unethical activities in connection with the Watergate break-in . . ."

Butler ruled Brosnahan out of order, and the San Francisco's floor microphone went dead.

Still another San Francisco lawyer, Richard Kaplan, argued that Brosnahan's motion was "a courtesy resolution" not subject to the April 1 deadline.

Delegates agreed with Kaplan by a 270 to 190 vote. Then came a 15-minute debate, with opponents arguing the resolution should not be passed until pending Watergate criminal trials are complete.

The resolution, however, was approved by a thunderous voice vote.

HEARINGS

At the press conference Janofsky said the Bar is "monitoring" the Watergate hearings and will obtain testimony given there.

Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox also is cooperating with the California Bar's inquiry, he added.

Under some circumstances, Janofsky said, a California lawyer can be disbarred or otherwise disciplined by the State Supreme Court even though he has not been convicted of a crime.

In such a case, a State Bar disciplinary committee holds a closed hearing — similar to a trial, with testimony, lawyers for the accused and the State Bar — on charges of unethical conduct.