

SFChronicle



HENRY ROTHBLATT
He seeks \$10 million

Watergate Lawyer Sues Nixon

Washington

Attorney Henry B. Rothblatt, fired by four of the Watergate defendants after a disagreement over their guilty pleas, filed suit against President Nixon and others yesterday, asking more than \$10

million "for malicious interference with an attorney-client contract."

The New York attorney seeks to recover \$113,500 in legal fees he says he is owed by his former clients — Bernard L. Barker, Eugenio R. Martinez, Virgilio R. Gonzalez and Frank A. Sturgis.

He also asks \$1 million for breach of contract of clients, loss of fees and damages to his reputation, and \$9 million punitive damages, alleging that the four were pressured and induced to plead guilty.

Others named in the suit include John N. Mitchell and Maurice L. Stans, the director and finance chairman of the President's 1972 campaign; the Committee for the Re-election of the President, its finance arm and officers, and two other Watergate conspirators, E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy.

Barker, Martinez, Gonzalez and Sturgis — all arrested in the Watergate break-in — had pleaded innocent. But after one week of trial in January they asked to change their pleas to guilty and Rothblatt refused to go along.

The court appointed a new lawyer for the change in plea, and the four men later hired Daniel E. Schultz, their present attorney.

Schultz last week asked U.S. District Court to withdraw the guilty plea.

Rothblatt alleges that Hunt and Liddy, acting as agents for the election committees, hired the four men for the break-in and assured them they would be taken care of should the plan fail. Rothblatt said he, in turn, relied on those promises for his fees.

The claim for payment alleges that Mr. Nixon, in his April 30 speech, assumed responsibility for actions of his subordinates.

Associated Press