

Action Dismays and Shocks

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By Michael Taylor

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California lawyers who arrived here yesterday for the annual State Bar convention expressed disbelief and shock over President Ford's pardon of former President Nixon.

When word of the pardon was announced at a luncheon of some 200 trial lawyers, there was a chorus of boos and hissing — and practically no applause.

A spokesman for the State Bar said the 15-member Board of Governors had not yet convened to decide whether or not to press ahead with its investigation into possible disciplinary proceedings against the former President.

Mr. Nixon, who has been secluded in his San Clemente home since resigning on August 9, is a member of the State Bar and licensed to practice law in California.

Disciplinary hearings have been held — and in some cases, criminal conviction records reviewed — for four other California lawyers implicated in the Watergate scandals: John Ehrlichman, Donald Segretti, Gordon Strachan and Robert Mardian. Frank De Marco Jr., one of Mr. Nixon's tax attorneys, was added to the list earlier this year.

As the four-day convention of 1500 lawyers opened yesterday, lawyers could be seen standing outside the meeting rooms angrily discussing the pardon proclamation.

Talk ranged from speculation that "deals" had been made between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Ford last fall, when Mr. Ford became vice president, to a few isolate scraps of compassion for Mr. Nixon and his family.

San Francisco attorney David Baum, president of the California Trial Lawyers Association, called the pardon "shocking" and noted that "the only distinction that seems to get him a pardon is the high office he held."

Asked about the President's fear that Mr. Nixon would not get a fair trial in this country, Baum said that the publicity over Watergate "didn't seem to stop John Dean from getting a fair trial."

Several lawyers wondered, as one prominent Los Angeles delegate said, "why this all happened now."

"Was there an indictment about to come down?" the Southern California lawyer asked rhetorically. "And I also wonder how you can pardon someone for something that hasn't even come through a court of law."

At least one lawyer, though, was smiling about the pardon. Los Angeles attorney Dean Butler, Mr. Nixon's personal lawyer since the beginning of this year, said he was "pleased to hear about it."

"I know he (Mr. Nixon) will appreciate it, and, if nothing else, it's a load off this mind," Butler added.

As Butler talked briefly about the pardon, Dean Bailey, a Fresno lawyer who was standing nearby, shook his head — "I can't understand the pardon. I know the

President has the power to do it, but I think it's most unwise."

While talk of yesterday's pardon dominated the chatter in the hallways of the Community Convention Center here, lawyers also began the arduous process of sifting through 189 resolutions that will be thrashed out before the convention ends Thursday evening.

As it has in the past, the bar will consider resolutions to legalize prostitution between consenting adults. There also will be discus-

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sions on penalties for possession of dangerous drugs.

Other items on the agenda include discussions of spousal support, campaign financing, drunken driving, criminal law court procedures and even the perennial resolution that motorcyclists be forced to wear helmets.

In recommending disapproval on the last item, the committee noted that "there is no public interest to be served by attempting to protect people from their own stupidity."

Resolutions approved by

the Conference of Delegates become part of the bar legislative lobbying program here.

When not dealing with their resolutions, the delegates will be listening to speeches by Attorney General Evelle Younger and U.S. Supreme Court Justice William H. Rehnquist, among others.