

50 Lawyers in City Were Disciplined By Bar in 12 Months Ended April 30

By TOM GOLDSTEIN

Fifty Bronx and Manhattan lawyers were disbarred, suspended or censured during a 12-month period ending on April 30—the highest number in history—according to a report released yesterday by the grievance committee of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York.

In the 12-month period, the committee processed 3,147 complaints against lawyers, the largest number of complaints it has handled in its 104-year history. In the previous 12-month period, 2,821 complaints were processed. The complaints ranged from charges of neglecting clients to fraud and using improper influence.

These figures, said Powell Pierpoint, chairman of the committee, "indicate that the Watergate case is not an isolated phenomenon but a reflection of a significant increase in criminal and other serious misconduct by lawyers."

Although precise figures are

not available nationally, statistics compiled by the American Bar Association show that significantly more lawyers were disciplined in 1974 than in 1973.

According to F. LaMar Forshee, director of the Center for Professional Discipline of the A.B.A., 510 lawyers were disbarred, suspended or reprimanded in the calendar year 1974, compared with 371 a year earlier.

"Part of the increase is attributable to the increased number of lawyers and part is due to the better organization and structure of local disciplinary bodies," Mr. Forshee said. "I have no evidence that lawyers are behaving worse."

The committee on grievance of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York has long been considered a model for other disciplinary agencies. It has the responsibility of investigating and prosecuting lawyers charged with misconduct in the First Judicial

Department, which comprises Manhattan and the Bronx. About 35,000 lawyers practice in the First Department.

Several lawyers who had been involved in the Watergate scandal were admitted to practice in the First Department. Some have already been disciplined, and the cases against others, including former President Richard M. Nixon, are pending.

"The legal profession, and particularly lawyers in high governmental positions, all too seldom has assumed moral leadership and all too often has been a reflection of community standards of the clients whom they represent," Mr. Pierpoint said.

For the 12-month period that ended April 30, 1975, 19 lawyers were disbarred and 31 were suspended or censured by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for the First Department. In the same period a year earlier, 12 lawyers were disbarred and 17 were censured or suspended.