

Although former President Nixon was pardoned by his successor in the White House for any wrongdoing related to the Watergate crimes, he now faces the judgment of his peers in the legal community in New York. This may come as close as any semi-official body can to defining Mr. Nixon's Watergate activities and recording a quasi-legal "judgment" on his character and Presidency.

The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, empowered by the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court to handle investigations into the fitness of lawyers to practice, has been conducting a careful, confidential inquiry to determine whether he was involved in professional misconduct. Mr. Nixon's attorney has been "plea bargaining" for his client, attempting to permit him to resign without providing a bona fide reason for doing so. Quite properly, the Bar Association's committee on grievances and the Appellate Division here have treated Mr. Nixon's case as if he were any lawyer accused of activities that could result in disciplining, censure or disbarment.

Mr. Nixon should be given every opportunity to state his case for resignation or against disbarment. The procedure for resignation calls for an honest recitation of charges that would, in effect, come close to an admission of guilt. Simply pleading to poor health, even with a promise not to practice law again in New York, would be a new deception piled onto those of the past. This should not be permitted to happen in a profession whose canons call for equal treatment—even for ex-Presidents.

See letter to the editor,
NYT 1 Oct 75.