

Capitol Punishment

Jeanne and Marvin and Bootsie and Judy and Spiro?

By Art Buchwald

If President Nixon had any class, he would declare the state of Maryland a disaster area. Several of its leading engineers and builders have admitted to bribery. Its former governor, Spiro Agnew, has been convicted of income tax fraud. Its present governor, Marvin Mandel, has announced publicly that he's in love with another woman. He can't afford to pay his hotel bill, and Mrs. Mandel refuses to leave the Governor's Mansion because she says the governor has taken leave of his senses.

It seems to me that all these problems could be resolved to everyone's satisfaction providing there is goodwill on everybody's part.

What I propose is the following: Since former Vice President Spiro Agnew no longer has any need to live close to Washington, and since it may be difficult to maintain a \$190,000 home without help from the Secret Service, I suggest that he and Mrs. Agnew

move into the Governor's Mansion with Mrs. Mandel. The rent they would pay would go to Gov. Mandel so that he can pay his rent.

The Agnews know the house well and would feel very much at home there. Mrs. Mandel would have companionship during these trying times and would be able to cut down expenses since she and the Agnews could share the food costs.

Now the important thing from Maryland's standpoint is that since it seems impossible to have their governor living in the mansion, they would at least have an ex-governor living there, which would give them confidence in their state government.

In ordinary times Gov. Mandel might object to having an ex-governor moving in with his wife; but these, as everyone will admit, are not ordinary times. I believe Gov. Mandel would be grateful to know that all the bedrooms in the Governor's Mansion are not being wasted. There is no doubt that the rent the Agnews would pay could help him out of his financial difficulties.

From former Vice President Agnew's standpoint, his housing problems would be solved for a while and he would have a chance to renew old friendships with many people he had dealings with as governor of Maryland. While these relationships are now slightly strained, there is no doubt in my mind that if Mr. Agnew were living in the Governor's Mansion, these former friends would come back to see him in the slight hope that they could get some more road-building contracts out of it.

Now I know you're saying that it's a perfect plan, but we should look at the disadvantages. There is always the possibility that Gov. Mandel could get a court order to evict his wife from the mansion. Then he might move in with the woman he loves. This could raise a great moral issue for the Agnews. They are very straight-laced people and might not approve of boarding in a house with an unmarried couple. It would smack of living in a commune.

They could, of course, move out with Mrs. Mandel and take another house, but it wouldn't be the same thing as living with her in the Governor's Mansion.

This is the only drawback that I can think of. I must admit that I have not checked out my plan with the Agnews or Mrs. Mandel. And I haven't called Gov. Mandel to see how he feels about it. But I have discussed the idea with many leading citizens of Maryland who are very enthusiastic about the idea.

One Baltimore resident summed up the feelings of all the Marylanders I talked to when he said, "It makes a lot of sense to me. The Agnews would be fools not to do it, and certainly Barbara Mandel would have nothing to lose."