

Team to study contract system

Maryland feels

ANNAPOLIS, Md. [AP]—Maryland's governor today named a task force to study the awarding of some state contracts without competitive bidding, the practice which is at the root of the investigation of Vice President Agnew.

A statement from Gov. Marvin Mandel's office said the task force would review Maryland's long-standing practice of awarding engineering and architectural consultant contracts without competitive bidding.

The 11-member panel is to propose legislation to correct any abuses by Dec. 1.

The task force includes Chicago architect Jack D. Train, who was selected by Mandel from a list prepared by the American Institute of Architects. He is a fellow of the institute.

MANDEL'S ACTION COMES amid a widening federal probe of allegations that kickbacks and bribes influenced the distribution of state and local government contracts with the consultants.

A federal grand jury in Baltimore is hearing evidence about Agnew's alleged re-

lations with architects and engineers when he was county executive in Baltimore and governor of Maryland.

In its first action, the grand jury indicted Dale Anderson, the current Baltimore County executive, on 39 counts of extortion and bribery. The charges involve eight consulting firms which have done business with the county.

Practices for awarding nonbid consultant contracts vary among state agencies and local governments. Many agencies use eligibility lists of contractors. Officials say the consultants on the lists are picked for their competency.

BOTH DEMOCRATIC and Republican candidates on the state and local levels have received campaign contributions from contractors.

Mandel, a Democrat, raised more than \$900,000 from a recent dinner fund-raiser. He has promised to return \$40,000, the amount estimated to have come from consultants doing business with the state.

The governor named Dr. Abel Wolman,

Agnew scandal

professor emeritus of sanitary engineering from Johns Hopkins, to head the task force.

The panel's "deliberations and decisions will go a long way to correcting misimpressions about our system of awarding contracts and to make improvements where they are needed," Mandel said.

In a letter to Wolman, Mandel said he hoped the task force would devise "A model system that is beyond reproach, not only for its equity in the method of awarding contracts, but also for its intrinsic protections against possible abuses."

Six of the 11 task force members are engineers or architects.

Other developments in the Agnew scandal:

● Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. [R., Conn.] said Agnew is innocent of the allegations he took bribes while governor of Maryland.

"He is an innocent man," Weicker said in Hamden, Conn. "I think it is time in this country that we stop this business, whether it is Daniel Ellsberg or Spiro Agnew, of being preoccupied with a man's guilt. As far as I'm concerned he is Vice President

and he is innocent and that's that."

● In Los Angeles, Chesterfield Smith, American Bar Association president, said he thinks the Vice President could be indicted but not tried while in office. "I do not believe . . . that he can be tried and convicted while in office," Smith told a news conference. "After he would be indicted, was impeached or until he went out of office, the indictment would stay until either he dies."

● According to close associates, Agnew believes that, even without an indictment, the corruption investigation has reduced his future political prospects to "just about zero."

Following a weekend speech to Republican women in Los Angeles, the Vice President met with a group of California Republican officials and, according to a spokesman, told them he believes his political career has been destroyed.

J. Marsh Thomson, Agnew's press secretary, said the state officials disputed Agnew's view of his political future.