

His Regime Free Of Payoff Pattern, Mandel Asserts

By Charles A. Krause
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ANNAPOLIS, Oct. 11— Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel vehemently insisted today that neither he nor any members of his administration are or ever have been involved in a kickback scheme similar to that of his predecessor, Spiro T. Agnew.

At his weekly news conference, Mandel also said that he is not presently under investigation by the federal grand jury in Baltimore probing political corruption in the state. Furthermore, the governor said, he does not expect to be investigated by the grand jury or the office of U.S. Attorney George Beall.

Earlier yesterday, when Beall was asked at a Justice Department press conference in Washington whether his investigation would now focus on the Mandel administration, Beall responded: "I can't rule anything out at this time because the investigation continues and as I say the parameters are impossible to precisely define."

Asked about that, Mandel said, with a hint of anger in his voice: "I would assume the (federal grand jury) investigation is continuing but it won't involve" the Mandel administration.

Mandel appeared confident throughout a 45-minute press conference in which he answered a record 113 questions. Fewer than 10 of these questions were on subjects unrelated to either Agnew's resignation or the pos-

sibility of corruption within the Mandel administration.

Asked whether he was aware of the system of kickbacks in return for state engineering contracts described in the Justice Department's 40-page summary of criminal evidence against Agnew, Mandel said: "I knew of no such system. There is no such system. And if there was a system it stopped on Jan. 7, 1969," when Mandel succeeded Agnew as governor of Maryland.

Mandel claimed that neither he nor any member of his cabinet has ever accepted unrecorded campaign or personal contributions from contractors doing business with the state.

Mandel said he had never even been approached with an offer of a bribe in return for state contracts. Asked why the system of payoffs suddenly stopped when he became governor, Mandel said "They knew better, it just wouldn't work."

A source close to Mandel said later that it would be "naive" to assume that campaign contributions have never been discussed in Mandel's presence, but this source said Mandel always refers political contributors, to Mandel's two chief fundraisers, Dale Hess and Harry W. Rodgers III. They generally refuse to accept cash payments, the source said.

"The difference between



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Gov. Marvin Mandel . . . expects no investigation.

the guys around Agnew and the guys around Marvin is this: Marvin's guys are pros, they're too smart" to accept unrecorded payments that could be interpreted as payoffs for state work, the source said.

Mandel said at his press conference that he never personally interferes with the award of state contracts, and leaves those decisions to department heads and finally to the state's 3-member Board of Public Works of which he is chairman.

Mandel said he probably

would not recommend that General Francis Burch investigate the federal evidence against Agnew to determine whether the former Vice President violated state laws.

Mandel, who said Agnew called him Wednesday shortly before he resigned as Vice President, said he thought Agnew "has suffered completely and totally far more than any further action on anyone's part could make him suffer. I think the matter should be closed."