

Agnew Event Aftermath

Banker Indicted in Md. Probe

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ANNAPOLIS, June 19 — Maryland banker Blagden H. (Buddy) Wharton was formally served with four grand jury indictments today charging him with perjury and election fraud in connection with a fraudulent contributors' list he signed last year for a state GOP fund-raiser for Vice President Spiro T. Agnew.

At the same time, Prosecutor Martin Wolff declared there is "a distinct possibility" he will seek the indictment of other Republicans who may have known of the scheme to hide \$50,000 of Nixon re-election money used to swell the reported gate of the Agnew event.

The charges against Wharton technically are misdemeanors under Maryland law, but two of the four charges carry maximum penalties upon con-

viction of 10 years apiece in prison.

Wolff would not reveal which members of the Salute to Ted Agnew Night event had been questioned or what information had been obtained by the grand jury during its investigation.

Earlier this month Alexander Lankler, Maryland state GOP chairman, said the list of bogus contributors had been put together by himself and other state Republicans in order to cover up a \$50,000 loan to the committee from the National Committee to Re-elect the President.

The loan, Lankler said, was used to inflate the proceeds from the event and make it look like a booming success. At that time, he said, other



BLAGDEN H. WHARTON
.... free on bond

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INDICT, From A1

members of the 17-man committee were aware of the cover-up and the use of the also contributors' list.

Wharton, a 52-year-old vice president of the Maryland National Bank, was the committee's treasurer and signed campaign statements filed with federal and state election officials that included the list of non-existent donors.

The four-count indictment by the Anne Arundel County grand jury handed to him today accuses Wharton of filing a false affidavit regarding financing of the affair; unlawfully reporting details of the financial transaction; failing to identify the source of the funds and failing to report the receipt of "valuable things" which were listed as cold hors d'oeuvres, bar mixes, a fresh fruit display and gratuities.

The first two charges, which both involve perjury, upon conviction carry maximum 10-year sentences while the third and fourth charge, both violations of the state election law, carry a maximum penalty of one year in jail and \$1,000 fine upon conviction.

Wharton was released in a \$1,000 personal recognizance bond and is slated for arraignment Monday in Anne Arundel Circuit Court.

He remained silent and impassive as he accepted the indictment papers from deputy Anne Arundel County Sheriff Merel Chaney and declined to answer questions from newsmen gathered at the county courthouse.

The failure of the state's attorney's office to reveal the name of the person indicted by the grand jury last week had generated an air of mystery about today's presenta-

tion of the indictment papers.

Anne Arundel officials launched the investigation because the Agnew event financial reports were filed here in the county seat with the State Board of Elections.

Wolff said, however, that the lag in identifying the subject of the indictments was standard procedure for his office. If the person is not already in jail, he said, he is sent a post card and requested to appear within nine days of the indictment.

The procedure was set up, Wolff said, by Circuit Judge Matthew S. Evans to allow persons to learn of their indictment first from the court.

The perjury charges against Wharton stem from the filing by the Agnew fund-raiser committee of two conflicting reports with state election officials.

The first report, filed under Wharton's name on June 14, 1972, showed that \$50,000 in receipts had come from ticket sales to 31 individuals. A second report, filed May 29 of this year, lists the National Fi-

nance Committee as the actual source of the money and deletes any mention of the 31 donors.

Lankler, who was not involved in signing either report, has attributed the \$50,000 loan to "political puffery", and said that the change in the general political climate brought on by the Watergate scandal has made "what was an acceptable idea on June 14, 1972, now . . . unacceptable."

Under fire for his part in the affair, Lankler beat off an attempt Monday by some state Republicans to oust him.

Listed among the 17 committee members are several high-ranking banking officials and wealthy Maryland stockbrokers as well as some of the most prolific fund raisers in the state GOP.

The \$50,000 was a commitment from Nixon campaign officials to Lankler after he solicited \$150,000 for the national campaign from Flornez R. Ourisman, a wealthy former Maryland auto dealer.

The money—in \$100 bills—went from the National Finance Committee to Reelet the President to Lankler and then into the Agnew committee's account in the Maryland National Bank. The loan was returned to the Nixon campaign following the fund-raising event.

Lankler, who has not been called to testify before the grand jury, has said that the Agnew night committee decided to revise its reports of the source of the \$50,000 after U.S. Rep. William O. Mills (R.-Md.), committed suicide May 24. Mills shot himself after it was disclosed he had received an unreported \$25,000 campaign contribution in 1971

from the Nixon re-election fund.

Wolff said today that his office had "other information" in addition to that which led to Wharton's indictment and that some of this information involved unspecified committee members.

The Wharton indictments, he said, were rushed because of a one-year statute of limitations on misdemeanor election law violations.

"We were working under a deadline in Wharton's case," he said, "Now we're going to take a little more time and take a careful look at all the persons involved."

The grand jury, Wolff said, is not expected to hand down any additional indictments this week relating to the Agnew committee.

The reports from the Agnew Salute committee also are being investigated by the federal General Accounting Office, the congressional investigatory agency, to determine if they conform to federal election laws.