

In Maryland, You Pay 'The Hatchet Man'

BALTIMORE — In 60 years in the engineering business here, Gustav J. Requardt asays he never encountered the "hatchet man."

But, says the 86-year-old Requardt, the "hatchet man" is there, cutting up government contracts among Maryland engineering consultants — often in exchange for cash.

Requardt, recently retired partner in one of the state's most prestigious firms, recalls how it happened to a "friend":

"They called him and said: 'You want this job? You go down to the Lord Baltimore hotel . . . and he meets this hatchet man who says, 'Give me \$250,000 cash on the barrel and 10 percent of every voucher you submit.'"

Requardt vows that although he won millions of dollars in state contracts over the years, he never had to pay the hatchet man.

But he candidly acknowledges that he and every other successful consulting engineer funnels cash into political campaigns because "it helps them remember you're around."

"If I weren't a consulting engineer I wouldn't give so much," said Requardt, whose office walls are plastered with politician's pictures. "No matter how good an engineer is, he couldn't get as much work if he didn't make those contributions."

Requardt's firm apparently is not involved in the current federal probe of extortion, fraud, conspiracy, and tax evasion which has touched a number of politicians, including Vice President Agnew.

But the thrust of the federal inquiry seems to be aimed at trying to determine who dealt with the "hatchet man" and if men like Requardt had to make campaign contributions to get around him.
