

Md. GOP Panel Is Indicted

By Edward Walsh

Washington Post Staff Writer

Six prominent Maryland Republicans, including a close personal friend of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, were named as unindicted "co-conspirators" by an Anne Arundel grand jury yesterday for their alleged participation in a scheme to inflate the reported proceeds from a 1972 Agnew testimonial dinner.

The grand jury actually indicted the defunct 17-member committee that sponsored the dinner with four counts of conspiracy to violate the Maryland Fair Elections Practices law. The

six named as co-conspirators, including longtime Agnew friend J. Walter Jones and Maryland GOP Chairman Alexander Lankler, were all members of the dinner committee.

As unindicted co-conspirators, the six are neither charged with crimes nor are they liable for jail terms or fines as individuals. A sev-

enth person, the Rev. Roy Pfautch of St. Louis, a political consultant hired by the Agnew committee to handle fund-raising, was also named as a co-conspirator.

The committee was charged with pumping \$49,900 in Nixon re-election funds into the proceeds of

See INDICT, A7, Col. 1

INDICT, From A1

the "Salute to Ted Agnew Night" dinner in Baltimore and then concealing the source by listing the money as ticket sales to 31 persons. The 31 had not purchased tickets.

Conviction carries with it a maximum fine of \$1,000 on each count against the committee as a whole. Although the committee no longer exists, Maryland law provides that the fines can be collected from the committee members including those who were not named as co-conspirators. The indictments were handed down Tuesday and announced yesterday.

In addition to Jones and Lankler, the seven alleged co-conspirators named in the indictment were:

Lynn Meyerhoff, a prominent Baltimore socialite who was chairman of the Agnew night dinner committee; Fleur Bresler, the wife of Charles S. Bresler, a major Washington-area developer who unsuccessfully ran for the post of Maryland state comptroller on the Republican ticket headed by Agnew in 1966; Blagden H. Wharton, a vice president of the Maryland National Bank who was treasurer of the Agnew night committee; John W. Steffey, a former Republican state senator from Arundel County who is now in the real estate business; and Mr. Pfautch.

Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Warren B. Duckett said the seven alleged co-conspirators were singled out for mention in the indictment because "the evidence reflected overwhelmingly that these individuals were the prime people on the committee, that they made the decisions and they were actively involved" in the fund manipulation scheme.

"We felt this was the fairest way to handle allegations of this type," Duckett said. "We did not want to say to individuals that we indict you personally and you have to carry the load for the whole committee. But we did not want to indict just the whole committee because we did not feel that was warranted. There is

no doubt this was the best way to handle it."

Duckett added that "there were many other people listed as members of the committee who were entitled to be excluded from the actual working members who were in a decision making position."

GOP Chairman Lankler, who has announced he will resign his post next month, acknowledged in June that he obtained the \$49,900 as a loan from the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President.

He has said the scheme was approved by top Maryland Republicans after it appeared ticket sales to the Agnew affair were lagging.

The indictment against the committee was the second to result from the Agnew testimonial dinner. On June 13, Wharton, the Agnew committee's treasurer, was indicted on four counts of perjury and election fraud for his role in signing campaign reports that contained the list of 31 phony contributors.

Wharton, who has taken a leave from his job as a vice president of Maryland's largest bank, is the only person who faces a possible jail term in connection with the case. Duckett said yesterday that because of the way campaign laws are written, campaign committee treasurers "stand in very unfortunate and vulnerable positions, not only in this case but in others."

Jones, one of the alleged co-conspirators, is an Annapolis banker and a long-time friend and political supporter of the Vice President. Jones, along with I. H. Hammerman, a wealthy Baltimore investment banker, is said by sources to be a target of the same federal investigation in Baltimore that is probing into Agnew's affairs.