Political Scandal Is a Md. Tradition

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About two decades ago, Maryland was rocked by campaign charges that a close associate of Gov. Theodore Roosevelt McKeldin had demanded a large fee from an engineering company to help get the firm "a large amount of the state's consulting engineering business."

The allegation by Democratic gubernatorial candidate H. C. (Curly) Byrd in the 1954 campaign was never proved and McKeldin was reelected. Last week, 19 years later, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew pleaded no contest to tax evasion charges that, while governor of Maryland he accepted cash payments from consulting engineers who were awarded state contracts.

In so doing, Agnew said, he was only following "a long-established pattern of political fund-raising in the state."

While allegations of corruption usually went unchecked in the 1950s, the current U.S. attorney for Maryland, George Beall, and his two predecessors in the 1960s have had some singular success in tracing such patterns.

They have been so successful, in fact, that Maryland has acquired a reputation for corruption to match that of Huey Long's Louisiana, the Massachusetts of James Michael Curley, or the New Jersey, West Virginia and Illinois of the current era.

Former U.S. Sen. Joseph D. Tydings, who as a federal prosecutor in Baltimore in the early 1960s investigated a scandal-ridden savings

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and loan industry, believes the state's seamy reputation is undeserved. "These things go on in other places, too," he said recently, "but they have been vigorously prosecuted in Maryland."

That may be. Certainly over the years, and especially during the last decade, vigorous prosecutors haven't been lacking for work. All sorts of public officials have been indicted, many have been convicted, and a number have gone to jail for crimes committed in office.

Agnew is the first Maryland governor or former governor to be charged with serious crimes, but in recent years one congressman, one U.S. senator and a former General Assembly leader in Maryland have been convicted and sentenced to jail terms for federal offenses.

Former Rep. Thomas F. Johnson (R-Md.) got caught up in the Maryland savings and loan scandal and A. Gordon Boone, former speaker of the House of Delegates did, too. Both were convicted and served prison terms. (Rep. Frank W. Boykin (D-Ala.) was also convicted in connection with that same probe.)

Last year, former Sen. Daniel B. Brewster (D-Md.), Boone's former law partner, was convicted of receiving an unlawful gratuity in connection with third-class mail rate legislation. His case is under appeal.

Agnew's successor as county executive of suburban Baltimore County, Democrat Dale N. Anderson, is now under federal indictment on more than 40 counts of extortion, bribery and tax evasion charges.

Though Agnew is immune from further federal prosecution under the terms of his negotiated plea, he could conceivably face state charges.

Gov. Marvin Mandel has indicated that Agnew probably will not be subjected to state prosecution. But, if Agnew is, the prosecutor in a state case could be Samuel A. Green Jr., the Democratic Baltimore County state's attorney.

But Green has problems of his own. He is under indictment for bribery (including soliciting and accepting a "carnal bribe"), embezzlement, larceny after trust, perjury and misconduct in office.

Political corruption in Maryland has, over the years, fallen into several categories.

Sometimes, as in the Agnew case, it has involved the payment of cash to public officials by those seeking state contracts. Often it has involved land: its sale, taxation and zoning.

The atmosphere for corruption has been enhanced by the state's rapid growth, over the last two decades particularly in the suburban counties around Baltimore and Washington. The growth meant land development and major public works projects—highways, bridges, tunnels—that in turn, meant state and county contracts and big money for private firms.

Though rumors of bribes and payoffs fill the corridors at every session of the Maryland General Assembly, most of the state legislators who have been prosecuted in recent years have been accused of crimes unrelated to their legislative duties.

Last May, however, former Del. Leonard S. Blondes was convicted on state charges that he demanded and received a bribe from a lobbying group, the Montgomery County Bowling Proprietors Association for his efforts to try to change the law to permit county bowling alleys to have beer licenses.

This year, State Sen. Clarence M. Mitchell III, a Baltimore Democrat, was indicted on charges of violating the federal income tax laws.

A federal grand jury indicted Del. James (Turk) Scott on narcotics charges, but Scott was never tried. He was shotgunned to death in a Baltimore basement garage.

A few years ago, while a Baltimore state senator named Frank McCourt was being held in New York on narcotics

A. GORDON BOONE

THEODORE R. McKELDIN

Maryland political scandals of the past swirled about

charges, some of his colleagues in the Senate worked feverishly to raise bail money and get him back in time to kill a bill to outlaw pinball-machine gambling. (As it happened, McCourt returned to Annapolis in time to vote, but then declined to do so, blaming adverse publicity. The bill passed—by one vote. McCourt was later acquitted.)

Money and politics are thoroughly entwined in Maryland, as in other states.

When the General Assembly is in session, it is almost impossible to avoid lobbyists. In the bars around the statehouse in Annapolis, many legislators never pay for drinks when lobbyists are around. The lobbyists also buy dinners for legislators.

This year lobbyists at the General Assembly spent $900,000—$10,000 a day and an average of nearly $5,000 per legislator—to try and influence the course of legislation. One lobbyist, James J. Doyle Jr., received $66,000 for his efforts, during the 90-day legislative session, according to official records.

Money may or may not be useful in Annapolis—though the lobbyists who spend the most usually have the reputation of being the most effective—but it is certainly useful in elections.

Gov. Mandel has already raised about $900,000 for his 1974 re-election campaign. (Since the news of the Agnew investigation became public last summer, Mandel has promised to return about $40,000 received from contractors who do business with the state.)

Much of Mandel's fund raising has been done by three men: Irvin Kovens, Harry W. Rodgers III and W. Dale Hess.

Kovens is a Baltimore businessman; Rogers, the chairman of the board of Tidewater Insurance Agency, Inc., and Hess, a former legislator and Tidewater vice president. All are wise in the ways of state Democratic politics and demonstrably competent at extracting political contributions from potential donors.

All three developed as political operatives during the administration of J. Millard Tawes, the old-guard Demo-

DANIEL B. BREWSTER

THOMAS F. JOHNSON

former Gov. McKeldin's associate and these legislators.

crat who preceded Agnew as governor.

With them worked George Hocker, a keg-shaped lobbyist for breweries and other interests who functioned as the gray eminence of the Tawes administration.

"It was George who got things done," recalls a Democratic veteran of the statehouse in the Tawes years. "Sometimes it wasn't clear whether it was Millard or George who was really running things. George was the inside man, no question about it."

Observers of that period recall that Hocker had complete access to Tawes and was the man who cleared patronage appointments. If someone wanted to see Tawes personally, the quickest and easiest way was to go to Hocker.

During that era, the rumor persisted that state judgeships were for sale. The allegation surfaced publicly in a 1970 tax evasion trial of prominent Baltimore attorney Robert J. Callanan.

During the trial, the prosecutors alleged, and presented testimony, that Callanan had told federal officials, at a pre-indictment trial on his tax problems, that he had been the conduit for a $5,000 payment that went to buy a judgeship for his then-law partner, Paul Pitcher, in 1966.

The payment was made in the form of a political contribution to the Democratic gubernatorial campaign contribution to the Democratic gubernatorial campaign of Thomas B. Finan, now a state Court of Appeals judge. (Finan was Tawes' choice to succeed him as governor.)

Pitcher was appointed by Tawes to a seat on the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court in 1966. He died in 1968. Tawes denied to reporters at the time of the tax trial that he had "sold" a judgeship to Pitcher or anyone else.

Just as Tawes had Hocker, other Maryland governors have had their inside men. Justice Department information released at Agnew's court appearance last Wednesday indicates that when the former Vice President was governor, his inside man—or one of them—was mortgage banker I. H. (Bud) Hammerman Jr.

Hammerman, according to the Justice Department, took money from contractors at Agnew's request and then divided it, half for Agnew, a quarter for former State Roads Commission Chairman Jerome Wolff, and a quarter for himself.

The administration preceding that of Tawes was, like Agnew's, Republican. The governor then, from 1951 to 1959, was McKeldin, a former mayor of Baltimore who knew the state's political pathways well.

McKeldin's closest confidant was his former law partner, M. William Adelson.

In McKeldin's years as governor, Adelson was regarded as the unofficial lieutenant governor, a post that did not officially exist in Maryland until 1970.

McKeldin, according to a published account in 1955, had had a disagreement with an opinion issued by the office of the state attorney general.

"I don't need the attorney general," McKeldin is reported to have said. I've got Bill Adelson."

When he served McKeldin, Adelson also shared in a $64,000 fee for serving as bond counsel on the state's Baltimore harbor tunnel project. The State Roads Commission chairman said then that "the governor's office" had recommended Adelson for the job.

Although McKeldin was a Republican, Adelson is a Democrat. Since the McKeldin years, Adelson has continued to have a strong influence on state affairs as a highly suc- builders and financial institu- cessful lobbyist for utilities, tions, among others. In Annapolis now, he is nicknamed "the candyman."

Maryland has also had a certain amount of old-fashioned racketeering, mostly in Baltimore, that has left smudges on the body politic from time to time.

Former Baltimore Mayor Thomas A. D'Alesandro III's father-in-law, Dominic A. Piracci, pleaded guilty in 1969 to making a payoff to a labor leader named Guido Iozzi Jr. to insure labor peace on a construction job.

Earlier the same year, Iozzi was convicted of extortion and sentenced to 15 years in prison—after a major prosecution witness was fatally shot in a hunting accident by a U.S. marshal assigned to guard him.

More recently, there have been investigations by federal and state grand juries into the uses of land in Maryland's growing suburbs—outside of Washington and Baltimore.

In 1971 and 1972, former Prince George's County Commissioner Jesse S. Baggett and developer Ralph D. Rocks were convicted on bribery charges related to land development.