

Kickback Case--A New Witness

Baltimore

Another key witness in the federal investigation of kickbacks from Maryland contractors is reported ready to cooperate with federal officials in return for preferential treatment.

Informed sources said yesterday that I. H. Hammerman II, one of vice President Spiro Agnew's closest friends in this city, is negotiating with U.S. Attorney George Ball.

In return for limited immunity from prosecution, Hammerman is prepared to provide the prosecutor with information.

It could not be learned whether his testimony, if it ever reached the grand jury, would concern directly the allegation of bribery, extortion and federal tax fraud that Beall has told Agnew by letter were the focus of the investigation surrounding the Vice President.

Agnew and Hammerman were sixth-graders together here, and Hammerman has recently been a leader in booming Agnew for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976.

Hammerman, a millionaire financier and land developer and a major solicitor for and contributor to various Agnew campaigns, has avoided newsmen since August 8. On that date he issued a written statement saying that he was confident that allegations involving him would "prove to be unwarranted."

New York Times