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A FARKAS WITNESS IS GIVEN IMMUNITY

Goes Before Grand Jury in Ambassadorship Inquiry

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29 (AP) —A key figure in an investigation of the selling of ambassadorships was granted immunity against his wishes today and was taken before a Federal grand jury.

The man, 73-year-old Benjamin Mates, is a witness in an investigation by the Watergate Special Prosecutor's Office into the circumstances under which Ruth Farkas was appointed Ambassador to Luxembourg.

Mrs. Farkas, who received the post after making a \$300,000 post-election campaign donation to President Nixon in 1972, is scheduled to be replaced soon by Rosemary Ginn.

Prosecutors want to know if the \$300,000 was demanded in return for the appointment. Former Representative Louis Wyman, a figure in the investigation who said that he had pressed for Mrs. Farkas's appointment, insisted that he knew of no such arrangement.

Judge Signs Order

Mr. Mates is a long-time friend of Mr. Wyman and of Mrs. Farkas and her husband, George, who is board chairman of Alexander's department store.

Assistant Special Prosecutor Jon Sale asked Federal District Judge William B. Bryant to grant immunity to Mr. Mates. But Mr. Mates's lawyer, Benton Becker, opposed the move, saying that he felt the prosecu-

tion was trying to trap his client into a perjury case.

"Is the purpose of having him taken before the grand jury to put him in a position of a possible perjury case?" asked Judge Bryant.

"Are we setting him up for perjury?" Mr. Sale responded. "No, we're not."

The judge then signed the order.

The prosecutor's office said in its final report that it had not been able to prove a contribution-for-ambassadorship arrangement in a number of cases, but that "one matter was still under investigation."

That matter was the Farkas case.

Mr. Mates testified before the grand jury in March 1974.

Mr. Becker told Judge Bryant that he met at that time with Thomas F. McBride, a member of the prosecution staff, and was told that certain information had been developed.

Mr. Becker said that Mr. McBride told him that prosecutors had learned that in December 1971 Mr. Mates, Mr. Farkas and a Congressman from New Hampshire had lunch in Florida after a golf match. Mr. Becker did not name the Congressman in court. Mr. Wyman was a Representative from New Hampshire at the time.

Mr. Becker said that he had been told that the Congressman said in Mr. Mates's presence that for Mrs. Farkas to receive the appointment "Farkas would have to pay \$300,000 to the Nixon campaign." He said that Mr. McBride told him that Mr. Farkas reportedly responded, "You go it."

The lawyer said that he then

talked with his client Mr. Mates.

"His recollection is that he did attend the lunch, he did play golf, but he has no recollection whatsoever of such a conversation," Mr. Becker told the judge.

Afterward, Mr. Becker said Mr. McBride talked with Mr. Mates in his office and "indicated that in his opinion Mr. Mates was lying."

Judge Bryant before granting the immunity, said that Mr. McBride's expression of disbelief was not enough to bring a perjury case.