

# Mandel offers payment

## \$3,187 check for furniture may not be taken

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Annapolis—Former Governor Mandel is sending the state \$3,187 to pay for furniture he took from the executive mansion in 1977, but Governor Hughes is unsure whether to accept the check.

Mr. Hughes has given orders that the Mandel check, which is believed to be in the mail, be held until an inquiry into the legality of the transaction is conducted.

"He said there's a question as to whether any state employee can take state property and then pay for it, and whether there is any legal authority for the state to now accept the payment," Gene Oishi, the Governor's press secretary, said yesterday.

The disappearance of the furniture—including two wing chairs, a dresser, a leather sofa and a roll-top desk—came to light last winter after an inventory of the mansion's furnishings was completed.

Mr. Mandel, who had been forced to leave the mansion in October, 1977, after his conviction on political corruption charges, acknowledged taking the furniture and promised to repay the state in full.

The furniture had been purchased for the Mandels' private living quarters at the mansion and traveled with them to their present home in Arnold.

On Tuesday, John F. Sikopski, superintendent of the state's Annapolis complex, received a call from Mrs. Mandel, saying the check was on its way. Her call came on the day the state sent Mr. Mandel a check for nearly \$32,000 in back pay due him because his conviction was subsequently overturned.

Word of Mrs. Mandel's call was relayed to the Hughes office, causing some consternation.

Mr. Oishi said Mr. Hughes had "misgivings" over whether his predecessor could take the furniture under any circumstances.

"If we accept the check, it amounts to the Governor going out and selling state property," Mr. Oishi said.

He said the Governor had asked his legal advisers to look into the matter and recommend some kind of action. In the

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meantime, the check will not be cashed.

Mr. Mandel could not be reached for comment.

J. Max Millstone, the state's secretary of general services, said yesterday he believed that the Mandels had an understanding when the state purchased the furniture that they would eventually be allowed to reimburse the state and take it with them.

He said the arrangement was made by his predecessor, George Lewis, who said yesterday that he had no memory of such an agreement.

When the Mandels vacated the mansion 16 months ago, they left behind some of their own belongings, including a marble bust of Mr. Mandel, a set of crystal goblets, a stereo and a sofa.

Mr. Mandel wrote to a Hughes aide January 17, reminding him that his property was still there and promising to pick it up after a new inventory is completed.

"Anything there that belongs to the former governor he can have," Michael F. Canning, Mr. Hughes's chief of staff, said. "There's no question about that."

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