

Furniture report in Mandel case goes to Hughes

By G. JEFFERSON PRICE III
Annapolis Bureau of The Sun

Annapolis—The attorney general sent Governor Hughes a 327-page report yesterday on the results of his investigation into the removal of furniture from Government House by then-suspended Governor Mandel when he was forced to leave the mansion in 1977.

The Hughes administration and Stephen H. Sachs, the attorney general, refused to disclose the findings of the investigation, which began last March—two months after Mr. Hughes took office.

But Ejner J. Johnson, the Hughes staff director, who had not seen the report yesterday, said he understood it was being kept secret "because of the possibility of litigation."

If Mr. Sachs has recommended litigation—civil or criminal—in the case, he would have to obtain the governor's permission to proceed.

Mr. Sachs, however, would say only that the report included a 27-page cover letter, a 200-page report on the results of the investigation, and a 100-page appendix, including many exhibits.

The attorney general said that some 80 interviews were conducted in the course of the investigation, including "two, maybe three" interviews with the Mandels.

"Any further comment should come from Governor Hughes after he and his staff have reviewed our findings and our advice," Mr. Sachs said yesterday. "I frankly don't believe it should be made public at this point."

The completion of the report is the latest development in the saga of the missing furniture that came to light after Mr. Mandel left the mansion following his conviction on federal corruption charges.

The report was sent to Judson P. Garrett, the governor's chief legal adviser, who had asked Mr. Sachs to investigate the matter last March.

Mr. Garrett's request came after Mr. Mandel tried to give the state a check for \$3,187 to cover the cost of several pieces of furniture—including two wing chairs, a dresser, a leather sofa and a rolltop desk—which he and his wife Jeanne took with them when they left the mansion.

However, Governor Hughes refused to cash the check and instead ordered Mr.

Garrett to ask for an investigation by the attorney general.

In his letter requesting the probe, Mr. Garrett told the attorney general that "a preliminary examination of the relevant facts reveals uncertainty or a difference of opinion between some personnel of the mansion and the Mandels with respect to removal, ownership and-or value of items purchased by [the Department of] General Services, and also questions relating to the legal status and ownership of items purchased from the . . . housekeeping account."

Last August, Mr. Sachs said part of the investigation centered on whether more furniture and furnishings were missing from the mansion than had been covered by Mr. Mandel's check.

Refusing to comment on the contents of the attorney general's findings yesterday, Mr. Garrett said, "I think it would be irresponsible to ever release a report from the attorney general without even reading it."

He said that he would review the report over the weekend and discuss it with the governor Monday.