

U.S. rebuffs Mandel on work-release plan

By Robert Fuggetta

Former Governor Marvin Mandel's request to serve the remainder of his three-year prison term in a Maryland work-release program has been denied by the nation's top federal prison official.

Norman A. Carlson, the federal Bureau of Prisons director, rejected the proposal because moving Mr. Mandel from the federal prison at Eglin Air Base in Florida "would have been premature and preferential treatment," an aide said yesterday.

According to the aide, the bureau's policy prohibits transferring an inmate to a halfway house or work-release program until the final 120 days of his sentence. Mr. Mandel has served 10 months of his political corruption sentence scheduled to end in May, 1982.

Contacted by phone at the Eglin Air Force Base prison camp, Mr. Mandel said yesterday that he was "disappointed" by the decision. Working in the pre-release program would have been a "challenge and something I think I could handle in a way that would be interesting and useful," he said.

Under a proposal presented to Mr. Carlson last Friday by Mr. Mandel's attorney, the former Democratic governor would have served the balance of his prison term at the Anne Arundel County Detention Center.

The plan, which had the support of County Executive Robert A. Pascal and other top elected Republican state leaders, also called for Mr. Mandel to work full-time at the county offender aid and restoration program in Annapolis, counseling former inmates.

Bruce C. Bereano, Mr. Mandel's attorney, charged that keeping his client in prison was unfair because of a recent Bureau of Prisons decision in a case involving former Representative Charles Diggs (D, Mich.). Mr. Diggs was transferred from a federal prison February 25 to a Washington halfway house after serving seven months of a three-year prison sentence.

"I just can't square it [the Mandel decision] with what happened to Diggs. To me, it seems that Mr. Mandel has been given . . . inequitable treatment. He is not being treated as any other inmate," Mr. Bereano asserted.

E. Michael Aun, a Bureau of Prisons spokesman, said Mr. Diggs was transferred only after he was granted parole, effective May 25 of this year. "Except for a few cases back in the 1960s, it has always been the bureau's policy not to transfer inmates into halfway houses until the final 120 days of their sentences. If we had granted Mr. Mandel's request, it would have been preferential treatment," he said.

County Executive Pascal criticized Mr. Carlson's decision yesterday. "Here was an opportunity to utilize somebody's talent for the taxpayers instead of having him at Eglin Air Force Base folding laundry. I just don't think he is being treated like anyone else," Mr. Pascal charged.

The county executive, along with Warren B. Duckett, Jr., the county state's attorney, had written letters to Mr. Carlson in support of the proposal. Mr. Pascal also had contacted several "national Republican elected officials" to enlist their help.