

Md.'s China Policy Rattles a Few Teacups

By Dale Russakoff
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Maryland Gov. Harry Hughes and his wife, taking a page from Nancy Reagan's book, are filling out the state's official china and silver service using private donations from wealthy business executives.

While the First Lady's fund-raising efforts netted more than \$1 million, including a \$209,508 china set, the Maryland china-and-silver drive has raised a more modest \$9,100 — most of it from nine prominent businessmen who chipped in a tax-deductible \$1,000 each at the urging of James Rouse, developer of the new town of Co-

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lumbia, Md., and of Baltimore's heralded Harborplace.

The money will help cover an \$11,379 order that went out from the governor's mansion last week for 120 sterling silver forks, knives and spoons in the Kirk Repousse pattern and 181 pieces of Lenox Aristocrat china, several officials said. Business leaders will try to raise the remaining amount by the end of the year, the officials added.

The dishes and silverware are the same pieces that Hughes eliminated from his 1981-82 budget

earlier this year under fire from cost-conscious legislators. Maryland First Lady Patricia Hughes yesterday said through a spokesman that she is grateful to "those public-spirited citizens who have made possible the sharing of the beauty and tradition of Government House [the governor's residence] with all its public guests, both from within Maryland and throughout the country and, indeed, the world."

But the successful fund-raising drive has not stilled the political storm over what is now known as

Maryland's "china policy." Some politicians yesterday questioned the propriety of the effort, noting that the list of donors included three major developers, three builders, a banker and an oilman — all of whose businesses deal regularly with state agencies.

"It's very questionable, the governor getting silverware from people who do any kind of business with the state," said Del. Timothy Maloney (D-Prince George's), one of the early critics of the "china policy" in the legislature.

"I think they should practice extreme caution in making sure it doesn't even have the suggestion of
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By Gerald Martineau—The Washington Post
Maryland's official china, Lenox Aristocrat. The mansion ordered 181 pieces.

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any kind of conflict," said Del. Constance Morella (R-Montgomery), another of the early critics. "China can't be worth that."

The Hughes administration fired back boldly at its critics yesterday. "It is reassuring to know that Delegate Morella and Delegate Maloney harbor the same concern that the governor has evidenced . . . for the integrity of government," said an angry Lou Panos, press secretary to Hughes. The donors, Panos added, "expect nothing in return, and, as has been demonstrated throughout this administration, should expect no special favors."

Panos noted that the china and silver ordered last week are replacements for pieces that have been lost or broken over the years. They bring to 70 the number of place settings in the official dinner service, according to Ethel Tigner, manager of Government House.

One reason for the Hughes administration's sensitivity over the issue is that the governor and first lady have attempted to remove the mansion from political controversy, particularly after former governor Marvin Mandel was accused in a civil suit of taking state-owned furniture, liquor and household goods from it when he left office.

As governor, Hughes championed legislation that created Government House Trust, run by a nonprofit group known as Friends of Government House Inc., to accept all gifts and loans made to the mansion. All donations for the silver and china were made to Friends of Government House, Inc., officials said.

The group has raised \$50,000 in the last two years to redecorate the

neocolonial mansion's public rooms in the style of several periods of Maryland history, from the Federal era to the present. When Mrs. Hughes asked them to take on the china and silver project, they simply added it to the list, as a separately budgeted item.

"When we heard about it, we thought it was a very natural area to embrace," said Leonard C. Crewe, a Baltimore steel executive and president of the Friends of Government House. "Jim Rouse is a very civic-minded person, and so he took on the assignment."

Besides Rouse, the \$1,000 contributors are Carl M. Freeman Associates, a Montgomery County developer; George Hyman Construction Co. of Bethesda; Baltimore banker Robert H. Levi; Baltimore developer Robert E. Meyerhoff; Crown Central Petroleum president Henry A. Rosenberg Jr.; James Ryan, co-chairman of Ryland Group Inc. homebuilders, the Whiting-Turner Construction Co. of Baltimore and the Noxell Foundation, cosmetic manufacturers.

Hughes has acquired an unlikely defender in the china affair — former Gov. Blair Lee III, whom Hughes defeated in 1978. Lee said yesterday that he never noticed a shortage of china — "I always found a plate to eat on" — but he defended Hughes' original efforts to put the china and silver in the state budget.

"It's the same as with the Reagans," Lee said. "All these rich people take a tax deduction on their contributions and the government loses more money than if they'd paid for it with tax dollars."