

Record-Courier, Ravenna-Kent, Ohio, Tuesday, June 1, 1982 — 13

Grand jury indicts 4 in area investigation

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association voted to do so on July 9, 1981, Special Prosecutor Bradford M. Gearing said.

Action on similar plan to donate \$5,000 to Mrs. Roth's campaign was delayed by the insurance agents, Gearing added.

The agents, who received all county insurance contracts for the past 20 years, were allegedly told that future county insurance contracts would be bid if the donations were not made.

Until recently, the contracts were not properly advertised for bid. Instead, one of the association's 10 agencies would receive the contract and one-third of the premium payment and the remaining two-thirds would go into the association's treasury.

Gearing said Esposito collected checks from each of the agents sometime around July 19, 1981 and gave the donations to Richard Lombardi, Freeman's campaign treasurer.

Lombardi said he held the checks until they were either returned or payment was stopped on them by the contributing agents.

Freeman and Lombardi both claim none of the money remained in the campaign coffers.

Eight of the agents who donated the checks were found guilty of complicity in an unlawful interest in a public contract after Gearing filed charges against them May 21.

Gearing recommended delaying sentencing the eight agents provided they continued cooperating with the investigation.

The agents were among more than 40 people who

testified before the grand jury since it was empaneled May 10.

An indictment is not an indication of innocence or guilt. The four indicted will be brought to trial, but Gearing said there is "no timetable" for any possible trial dates.

Gearing said the nine-member grand jury could be reconvened to hear additional testimony because the jurors elected to recess rather than adjourn.

Gearing, or his assistant, Jim Rudgers, could recall the grand jury at any time if any additional evidence or testimony is uncovered.

Gearing would not say if negotiated pleas had been worked out with any of the four indicted today.

"We have discussed the matter with Esposito's attorney but we haven't talked with counsel for the other three," Gearing said.



EXPLAINING THE four indictments returned by the Portage County Grand Jury this morning is Bradford Gearing, special prosecutor. Those indicted were to be arraigned this afternoon in Common Pleas Court. (R-C photo by Ernie Mastrolanni)