

Kusper Opposes Use of Marshals at Polls

BY PAMELA ZEKMAN AND WILLIAM CURRIE

An angry Stanley T. Kusper Jr., chairman of the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, said yesterday that he is "unalterably opposed" to having federal marshals in polling places to deter vote fraud in the general election on Nov. 7.

At a press conference in his City Hall office, Kusper charged that Tribune disclosures of office mismanagement and questionable legal services showed that the entire Task Force series on vote fraud was politically motivated and a "personal attack on me."

Target Office

"We are the target office. I am the target guy. The system is the target. They [The Tribune] want to destroy the confidence of the people in the democratic system," Kusper charged.

"I don't think we have any particular problem with the functioning of this board. No one has been able to wave a finger at this board and say we have done anything improperly or unjustly.

Kusper said the board has been saving rather than squandering tax dollars, but added that the board might consider a management study and bidding on the moving, storage, and maintenance of voting machines.

The Democratic board chairman said he opposed deployment of federal marshals in polling places as suggested by several voter watchdog groups because they would be directed by U. S. Atty. James R. Thompson, a Republican appointee.

Promises Battle

"I don't want a dictatorship in this city. I just want elections run by the people that are supposed to be running them—Democrats and Republicans," Kusper said.

Saying that the board has been "hammered pretty hard" in The Tribune, Kusper said, "I will do battle with The

Tribune so long as I am chairman and alive, unlike my father."

The reference to his late father alluded to articles which disclosed that special board attorney William R. Ming, who was hired by the elder Kusper for legal work for the Polish Roman Catholic Union, had subsequently split union legal fees with Stanley Kusper Jr.

Kusper said Ming, a convicted tax dodger, was hired by his predecessors on the board while Kusper was board attorney. In the last six years Ming has collected more than \$74,000 in legal fees from the board.

Collected No Fees

Kusper was asked why the board continued to use Ming's services while Ming was barred from practicing in federal court for 21 months beginning in November, 1970, after he was convicted of failure to file income tax returns.

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Stanley T. Kusper Jr.

Kusper Tells His Opposition to Marshals in Polling Places

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did not practice there. Other members of his firm did," Kusper said. Kusper added that Ming collected no fees from the board for 1970 and 1971, but records show the firm was paid \$32,320.83 in 1972 for services that spanned late 1970 thru January, 1972.

Kusper said there was nothing improper about the continued use of Ming's firm, a decision made by all the board members.

Kusper criticized recent Tribune articles exposing waste of taxpayers money on the moving and storage of voting machines and padded payrolls in the maintenance department.

Charges Misquoting

The articles disclosed that in the last 20 years no bids had been solicited or made on millions of dollars in contracts given to favored Chicago companies to move and store the 6,200 city voting machines. Kusper charged The Tribune had misquoted Joseph Cope, a Bekins Moving and Storage Company salesman, who said he would welcome a chance to

bid on the contracts and could do it for 25 per cent less than is now paid.

Kusper claimed that Cope had withdrawn his estimate and had vainly asked The Tribune to print a retraction. However, James Caldwell, district manager for Bekins, said no retraction had been requested. Caldwell said he could not make an estimate unless he had specifications in a formal bid.

Cope, who made the statements before Caldwell became district manager, was not available for comment.

Kusper first claimed that the moving and storage contracts were not a "bidding type of situation," but later said the board would discuss the matter.

Erroneous Comparison

He also charged that The Tribune comparison of manpower used to maintain machines with the county and other midwestern cities was an "erroneous" one. The articles noted that the board's use of one serviceman for every 120 machines was far out of line with manpower needs.

The articles made reference

to a recent management study of the Cook County election department, also prompted by a Task Force report. The study concluded that the county could maintain their vote machines with a third less the full-time staff they employed at a savings of thousands of tax dollars.

Kusper quoted a small section of that report which suggested that drastic initial cuts made by the county as a result of the series could have been a disaster during the March primary.