Vote Machine Waste Told

BY WILLIAM CURRIE

The Chicago Board of Election Commissioners has been ignoring simple money-saving bidding procedures to award favored companies millions of dollars worth of contracts for storing and moving its voting machines and materials, The Tribune has learned.

Since Stanley T. Kaspar Jr. became chairman of the board in 1968, Cook County, which pays for moving city machines during general elections, and the city have appropriated $4 million to pay eight Chicago movers for storing and moving the machines and materials.

Kaspar admitted in a letter to The Tribune that neither he nor his predecessors in the last 20 years have ever sought formal bids for the lucrative contracts.

An informed spokesman in the trucking industry said at least one trucker moving and storing equipment for the election board makes a net profit on one truck in one day of $100 to $1,000.

If a trucker could make that kind of profit handling normal loads in the regular working year of 200 days he could reap a yearly income of $200,000 on one truck.

Under the present contract the board pays the movers $20 for each machine moved one way. Rates for moving the various other materials range from 75 cents to $1 per percent.

Calls Charge Excessive

A spokesman for the truckers charged that the $20 rate is exorbitant. "This is a definite waste of taxpayers’ money," he said.

In his letter, Kaspar excused himself and the election board from seeking competitive bids which experts say would force the companies to reduce their excessive rates.

"So far as the cost of moving the voting machines and election materials is concerned," Kaspar said, "this is primarily a matter of trucking rates which are fixed with state and federal regulatory authorities. Charging or paying any other rate is forbidden by law."

Dispute Opinion

However, Albert Robertson, chief of the Motor Carrier Division of the Illinois Commerce Commission, said Kaspar’s assessment of state regulations is wrong.

"There is no law that forbids charging or paying any other rate," said Robertson, "as long as the carrier files the rate with the commission and it is approved 30 days before the rate is effective."

"The carrier files the rate, not the commission," he said. He asserted it would be possible.

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Cost Totals Millions

Huge Waste in Handling of Voting Machines Told

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ble for a carrier to bid lower than the $20 rate used by the
tuckers, and to file that rate
with the commission.

Robertson also said of Kus-
pers letter that federal au-
thorities have nothing to do
with moving voting machines
or materials in the Chicago
area.

So far as the storage rates
are concerned, Kusper said in
his letter. "We believe we are
making use of all the storage
facilities in the City of Chicago
suitable for the purpose."

The Tribune surveyed other
truck ing and storing companies
in the Chicago area which say
they could move the machines
for less than $20 and store
them for less than the 18 cents
per square foot now paid by
the board.

Joseph Cope, sales manager
of Bekins Moving & Storage
Co., said he could move and
store the machines for 25 per
cent less than called for in the
contracts.

Cites Possible Saving

With a saving like that the
Board of Election possibly
could have saved taxpayers $1
million in the last three years.

One of the companies mov-
ing and storing machines for
the board is Stump the Mover,
Inc., 1076 S. Vincennes Ave.,
which has also had similar
contracts with the county election
division for 20

years.

The company is owned by
Robert F. Stump, whose wife,
Mary Rita, is the daughter of
Morgan P. Murphy Sr., for-
mer chairman of Common-
wealth Edison Co. and a long-
time friend of Mayor Daley.

Her brother is Rep. Morgan F.
Murphy Jr. (D., Ill.).

The Tribune Task Force, in
a series last January expos-
ing waste of county funds,
revealed that Stump and an-
other mover had con-
tacts to move county voting
machines without ever having
to bid on them.

The Chicago board's 6,200
machines also are the subject
of a federal probe into possible
kicks back on their purchase.

Following the expose, for-
mer County Controller Richard
Hodgesman negotiated the
major contract for County
Clerk Edward Barrett, who

now is under indictment in
connection with alleged kick-
backs from the voting ma-
chine manufacturer.

Other Movers Listed

James Gaughan, who suc-
ceeded Hodgeman as acting
controller and was fired Tues-
day, said the same lucrative
contracts were renegotiated
because the county was plan-
ning to rid itself of the ma-
chines eventually and did not
want to enter agreements
with new contractors.

Other companies moving
city election machines and
materials are: Dunn Bros.
Storage Warehouses Corp.,
6718 S. Cottage Grove Ave.;
Empire Moving and Ware-
house Corp., 5153 S. Cottage
Grove Ave.; Hasselt Storage &
Moving Co., 4956 W. Madison
St.; Hollander Storage & Mov-
ing Co., 2419 N. Milwaukee
Ave.; Von Sydow's Fireproof
Warehouse, 6666 S. South Chi-
cago Ave., and McCarthy Stor-
age Warehouse, Inc., which
moves and stores only election
materials.