

High Election Cost Even Higher Here; See \$500,000 Waste in '72

On March 21 the Cook County electorate will stand before another example of government waste—a voting machine.

To put two machines in every county polling place in 1972, election officials plan to spend a record \$1.6 million.

That is a waste of at least a half million dollars, a TRIBUNE Task Force-Better Government Association study has revealed.

Taxes of 830 Houses

And that is an amount equal to the average property taxes on 830 Cook County houses.

Over most of the last two decades, county bosses have been using the huge tabulators to pad their payrolls and award lucrative contracts to favored companies.

Not once have they sought formal, competitive bids for these contracts.

As election officers, they can claim immunity from state laws governing such contract procedures. Thus, the election departments have gone about their business virtually unquestioned.

Has Contract for Years

Here is what an in-depth accounting of these election costs has turned up:

● While the county hires one maintenance man for every 122 election machines, a comparative study reveals that four other cities hire one man to maintain as many as 1,000 machines.

● A family close to Mayor Daley has held one of those contracts for years and has never been asked to bid competitively.

● Some large Chicago area movers, who have never been asked by the county to bid, said they can bid competitively on the huge contracts. At least one mover said he could do the jobs for 25 per cent less than the existing contracts.

● The county pays hundreds of thousands of dollars to two companies with no contract. The companies merely submit invoices after the elections.

The \$1.6 million budgeted for the elections in 1972 is split between two departments: The election division of Cook County Clerk Edward J. Barrett's office will get \$740,002 to pay for storing and moving the machines and election materials. Barrett's office has also budgeted for \$234,060 to pay machine maintenance men.

County Gets \$673,000

The rest, \$673,000, goes to the County Board of Election Commissioners for moving the city's 6,043 election machines to and from polling places.

In 1971, Barrett's election division, headed by Thomas King, budgeted for 27 men to maintain its 3,300 voting machines during the off-election year.

But payroll records show that King hired only 18 men for the year.

Tho the job was done in 1971 with nine fewer men, election officials recently asked again for 27 men to maintain the machines in 1972.

In the 1972 budget they document their requests by submitting figures that show that 16.88 man-hours will be spent

on each machine during 1972, since there are two elections.

During interviews with THE TRIBUNE, election officials in four other cities reported that they do the same work on the same type of machines with much less manpower.

The maintenance chiefs in each of the cities said they could not find 16 hours of work to do on each machine either during an off-election or an election year.

Milwaukee has one full-time custodian to service 1,025 machines during an off-election year. Ten days before an election, it hires eight men to prepare the machines for voting.

One Custodian

Minneapolis also has one custodian for 1,000 machines. During the six weeks before and after an election, six men are hired to help him.

Denver has two maintenance men all year to maintain its 1,500 machines.

St. Louis hires six permanent men to service its 1,230 machines. It hires no extra men to help during the six elections it holds.

King and Edward Madsen, chief custodian of the county voting machines, insist that they could have kept 27 men busy during 1971 if it weren't for a court order which sealed the machines for a recount of 1970 votes.

Inside the machine, they said, are all sorts of things to fix, including broken levers, counters, cables, and keys. Then time must be spent to see that everything inside the machine works, they said.

Since they could not open the machines until the fall, King and Madsen said, the 18 men were kept busy last year maintaining the outside of the machines.

Madsen said he had his men painting and waxing the machines. They had to fix some broken casters, too, he said.

Paint Some Spots

But King denied that they painted the machines. "Maybe a few spots," he said. He said they used to wax the machines.

The custodians in other cities had never heard of waxing or painting a machine except for a few patches.

Donald Nelson, chief custodian of Minneapolis voting machines, said he fixed 25 machines during the 1971 off-election year. They were damaged during the 1970 elections. One machine took two days to fix. The others took an average of two hours, he said.

Milton Gruenwald, chief custodian of machines in Milwaukee, said: "I fixed about 10 machines that were damaged during the elections." The rest of 1971 was spent making sure that everything functioned properly on the machines, Gruenwald said.

Ransom F. Shoup, the man who manufactures and sells the machines to the county, estimated that a man can prepare 10 machines a day for an election.

Madsen refused to say how many hours his men work on a machine either during an elec-

tion year or an off-election year. Nor could he say who provided work figures for the people who compiled the budget requests.

King said they weren't his figures. "They're from the people in Mr. Barrett's office," he said.

A major portion of the \$1.6 million goes to two moving and storing companies: Stump The Mover, Inc., 10708 S. Vincennes Av., which rents one warehouse; and Joyce Co., 6428 N. Clark St., which rents four warehouses.

Store, Move Machines

Both companies store and move the machines and election equipment.

For at least the last 16 years Richard Hodgman, deputy county controller in County Clerk Barrett's office, has negotiated contracts with the two companies.

Contracts to move the machines for the city are held by six Chicago companies, including Stump, whose president is Robert F. Stump.

Stump's wife, Mary Rita, is the daughter of Morgan F. Murphy Sr., retired chairman of Commonwealth Edison Co. and a long-time friend of Mayor Daley. Her brother is Rep. Morgan F. Murphy Jr. [D., Ill.].

Storage Pays Well

From storage of machines last year, county vouchers show that Stump earned \$51,778.56. He stands to earn at least that much again in 1972 and will probably collect an additional \$37,600 for moving the machines during the elections.

In 1972, Hodgman said, the county expects to buy as many as 500 new machines. And Stump will get the contract again in 1972, he said.

The contracts for storage and moving stipulate that the county will pay 16 cents a square foot per month to store the machines and \$20 to move one machine one way.

Move Other Material

Hodgman said that the county also pays the two companies for moving election materials, including ballot boxes, ballots, canvass materials, and voting registers.

There has never been a contract for those services, Hodgman said in response to inquiries.

"Don't you believe in good will?" Hodgman asked.

In 1970 the county budgeted \$267,000 to move the materials. Tho the records were not complete, the two companies billed the county for most of that money by merely mailing in invoices.

Mortimer J. Joyce, president of Joyce Bros., said that during the 1970 elections he used two men on a truck to move the materials. But James Gaughn, an assistant to Hodgman, showed 1970 invoices to a reporter which billed the county for three men on a truck at \$13 a day for each man.

Hodgman explained that he feels no obligations to conduct formal bidding for the contracts because "the rates are

controlled by tariffs." He said that the tariffs are set by the Illinois Commerce Commission and apply to all movers.

Denies Set Tariffs

Ted Laski, auditor for the County Election Commission, which handles the city machines, also said he takes no bids on the contracts for moving the machines and materials because the "rates are controlled by the ICC."

A spokesman for the ICC flatly denied that it sets tariffs.

Commission regulations specify that a mover can set any tariff as long as it is filed with the ICC 30 days before it goes into effect.

Milwaukee spends \$29,648 a year to store its 1,025 machines, in contrast to the \$251,000 budgeted by the county to store 3,300 machines.

Milwaukee pays \$6.35 to move one machine one way.

Several large Chicago movers polled by THE TRIBUNE said they would welcome the chance to bid competitively for the contracts. Some said they thought they could bid lower than the existing contract.

One large mover said his company could underbid the existing contract by 25 per cent.

\$15 Is Sufficient

"No doubt about it," said the mover. "We went over our figures. You know, we don't want to be greedy, nor do we want to sock it to the county, but we have to make a few bucks, and we feel that \$15 [to move one machine] is more than sufficient."

He also said he could offer warehouse space to the county for 12 cents a square foot.

With a contract like that, here is what the county could save:

Of the \$704,002 budgeted to move and store the county machines and materials \$185,000 would be saved.

Of the \$673,000 budgeted to move the city machines and materials, \$168,250 would be saved.

Furthermore a reduction of the county maintenance payroll to three full-time voting machine custodians, and to 24 extra men hired for a total of one month to help during elections, would result in a savings of at least \$187,000.

Together these savings would total more than a half million dollars.

Tomorrow: The cost of curing County Hospital.