

2 Precinct Bosses Take 5th in Probe

BY GEORGE BLISS
AND WILLIAM CURRIE

Two Democratic precinct captains who recruited other Democrats to work illegally as Republican election judges in the March 21 primary yesterday refused to answer questions of an Illinois House elections subcommittee.

The two precinct bosses and an election judge who served illegally as a Republican each invoked their rights to refuse to answer questions at least 20 times.

Probe Tribune Charges

The three had been subpoenaed with others by the House subcommittee investigating Tribune Task Force charges of large-scale vote stealing and conspiracy to place bona fide Democrats in Republican judge positions, allowing Democratic domination of the polling places.

News cameras were barred from the hearing room in the State of Illinois Building, 160 N. La Salle St., while the three invoked the 5th Amendment against possible self-incrimination upon the advice of their

attorney, William A. Romanoff.

William J. Davis, a Forest Preserve ranger now attending a Chicago police law enforcement school, had boasted to Tribune reporters that he had appointed the three Republican judges in his precinct, the 5th Precinct of the 29th Ward. He said two of them were his stepdaughters. Davis was quoted in the article as saying he planned to appoint them again for the Nov. 7 election.

Others Refuse

Joe Davis, of 5262 W. Adams St., the Democratic precinct captain in the 10th Precinct of the 29th Ward, had been named in last month's Tribune series as the one who asked Miss Varna Mae Young of the same address to be certified illegally as a Republican judge who she had voted Democratic in 1971.

Miss Young, who also refused to testify, apparently should not have been certified by the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners.

Three other judges testified that they had never told Tribune reporters that they had been recruited to serve by their

Democratic captains. Two of them denied that they even talked to Tribune reporters.

Harriet Knowles, 19, of 6353 S. Parnell Av., denied emphatically that she had told two reporters that she and her sister had been recruited by State Rep. James Taylor [D., Chicago] and 16th Ward committeeman, to be judges on March 21.

Denies Statements

Miss Knowles, a Democratic judge, also denied that she ever told Tribune reporters that Walter Jefferson, an assistant Democratic precinct captain, had helped her and the other judges count ballots on election day, a violation of state law.

She said she did not even remember if Jefferson was in the polling place that day. Nor did she remember if her mother and sister had worked there as judges, the records show that the Board of Election Commissioners had paid them for working as judges on March 21.

State Rep. James McPartlin [D., Chicago] pointed out to Miss Knowles a Tribune reporter in the audience who had interviewed her and asked:

"Have you ever seen that man before?"

Never Saw Reporter

"No," Miss Knowles replied.

Another Republican judge, Wilhelmina House, 11404 S. Elizabeth St., also denied that she told The Tribune that she had been recruited to be an illegal judge by Emil Jones. Jones is secretary to Ald. Wilson Frost [45th] and is a Democratic candidate for the Illinois House.

Mrs. House, who has a Democratic voting record dating back to 1962, testified about the Tribune reports: "I made a mistake, Mr. Jones did not ask me."

Later she testified that the mistake was made by Tribune reporters.