

SACRAMENTO REPORT

No Magic Wand Will Make You The Postmaster

By CHARLES E. CHAPEL
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Postmasters are federal officers, hence they are officially appointed by the President of the United States upon the advice and recommendation of U. S. Senators and the House of Representatives. Strictly speaking, the California State Legislature has no authority or duty to directly or indirectly influence the selection of postmasters in California. In spite of the fact that the appointment of postmasters is entirely a federal function, I constantly receive mail from

men and women who want to be postmasters. Some of those who write to me are already in the U.S. Postal Service and are well qualified by education, character and postal experience. A few have no qualifications whatever for the duties of a postmaster but believe that if someone in public office will wave his magic wand, they will obtain what appears to be a position of prestige coupled with a high salary and a nominal amount of work. Actually, the postmasters in the 46th Assembly District on an average spend more than

44 hours per week. Their work requires them to study and remember many volumes of U.S. Statutes, U.S. Postal Regulations and bulletins. In addition, a postmaster is financially and legally responsible for all the cash and stamps handled by his post office, the supervision of the employees, and answering countless complaints and suggestions, both good and bad, from the public. THE SALARY of a postmaster fundamentally is determined by the amount of business done by his post office and not necessarily by the pop-

ulation of the area serviced by his post office. For this reason, the gross income of postmasters varies from one post office to another. Many years ago, if one political party went out of power and another party came into power, all the incumbent postmasters either resigned or were made so miserable by one means or another that they eventually resigned or were discharged. Generally, this is not true today in Southern California. I have no information about the situation in Northern California. I know when President Ei-

senhower was in office, the terms of several Democratic postmasters in and near the 46th Assembly District expired, but they were re-appointed and are still in office, simply because they were doing a good job. WHEN THE late President Kennedy was elected President, the terms of office of several postmasters who are Republicans expired, but they were re-appointed because of the excellent performance of their duties. I do not deny that some appointments are entirely political in nature but during the

14 years that I have been in the California State Legislature, I know of only one person appointed postmaster on purely political grounds and that postmaster voluntarily resigned before the term of office expired because the work was too difficult and the income too small. During the past month I have received several letters from people in El Segundo who want to become the Postmaster of El Segundo. Some of these people stated their qualifications, which are quite impressive. Others merely said that they wanted the job and

did not take the trouble to tell me what qualifications they have. ONE OF THE applicants wrote a short letter saying he expected me to appoint him and enclosed a letter from his clergyman stating that the applicant "attends church frequently and apparently is of good moral character." The word "apparently" indicated to me that the clergyman had some doubts about the moral character of the applicant. Neither the applicant nor the clergyman said anything about the ability to count stamps, sort mail or keep books of account. As already explained, I am not empowered to appoint postmasters, and forward all the mail on this subject to the Honorable Alphonzo Bell, member of Congress, 28th District, which includes El Segundo and the remainder of the 46th Assembly District.

Congressman Bell informs me that the incumbent U.S. Postmaster, El Segundo, was appointed in 1954, can continue in office if he wishes for five more years, although he can retire Aug. 1, 1964, if he wishes to do so, but there is no known reason why he should. Anyone who wants to be a Postmaster should write direct to Congressman Alphonzo Bell, House Office Building, Washington 25, D.C., but this does not mean that there are any job opportunities in this field of endeavor at present. Personally, I think a person qualified to be a postmaster could make more money with less effort in many other occupations. I believe that those who accept appointments as postmasters and do a good job are unselfish, dedicated people who are overworked and underpaid.

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