THE ELECTION EYE . . .

Watkins, Mrs. Kearnes Likely To Get Positions

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By Ben J. Plastino
Post-Register Staff Writer

Behind the scene maneuverin, indicate two Bonneville Count; Republican Central Committe officers will get the guberna torial appointments to replac two recalled Idaho Falls stat legislators.

It appears that two mod-erates or so-called middle-of roaders, Dane Watkins and Mrs. Elaine Kearnes, will be appointed state senator and state representative, respec-tively, in Legislative District 30 to succeed the two ousted Republican incumbents, State Sen. W. Fisher Ellsworth and State Rep. Aden Hyde.

Watkins is chairman and Mrs. Kearnes is the secretary of the Bonneville County Republican Central Committee and both have been active in county Re-publican circles and civic af-fairs.

Watkins is an executive with an equipment company owned by his father, George Watkins, well known Idaho Falls busi-nessman and civic leader. Mrs. Kearnes has been an office manager for a music company many years, besides serving on the side as a bookkeeper.

The two were among the six selected by Legislative District 30 Committee last Monday night as nominees to be considered for appointments to the two leg-islative vacancies by Democra-tic Idaho Gov. Cecil D. Andrus.

The other contenders were for state senator, besides Wat-kins, Keith H. Clarke, radio station executive, and David F. Morse, insurance agent; and for state representative, besides Mrs. Kearnes, Ken-neth Kugler, retired jeweler, and Richard McAtee, NRTS employe.

Under existing state law, the Legislative 30 Committee made up of the 17 precinct committ-men within the district under the chairmanship of Charles Just, Idaho Falls merchant, submitted the names of three nominees for the governor to make the appointments. They had 15 days to do that, or until Sept. 1, and the governor then has 15 days more, or until Sept. 15, to fill the vacancies.

If the governor declined to do so, the legislative committee then could make the appoint-ments.

The appointments are for the unexpired terms of Ellsworth and Hyde, which is until Dec. 1, 1972. They primarily will serve in the 1972 State legislatures starting next January.

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As observed previously, it's rather ironical that the Idaho Democratic governor must set-tle a Republican intraparty fight but that's what is going to hap-pen.

Andrus as the state's chief executive, likely will make the appointments early the com-ing week, maybe as early as Monday.

There have been rumors he might waive the appointments and let the Legislative 30 com-mittee fill the vacancies. How-ever, the governor is one who will not abrogate his responsi-bilities in such a matter, and to refer the nominees back to the committee would only bring more blood letting in an already bitter Bonneville Republican squabble.

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Although both Watkins and Mrs. Kearnes may be termed as moderates or middle or road-ers by Bonneville Republican standards, they are really fairly conservative but certainly more liberal than the other nominees and likely more willing to co-operate with Andrus.

Because of this, their nomi-nations has received backing by influential Democratic sources, as well as many Re-publican leaders.

Watkins issued statements and lent his support against the re-call. He has expressed a will-ingness to work with the gover-nor.

Both Watkins and Mrs. Kearnes were supported by the so-called moderate faction head-ed by Just .

The We The People organiza-tion led by Jim Hill, Bonneville Young Republican chairman, publicly endorsed Clarke al-though Clarke said he is not a member of the organization and that he is his own independent candidate.

However, Clarke, as a radio broadcaster for years, said party leadetrs, has followed an ultra conservative line. Further, he spoke warmly of Re-publican Don W. Samuelson and against Andrus in both the 1966 and 1970 gubernator-ial campaigns, the former which Samuelson won, the lat-ter which went to Andrus.

Morse, an extreme right wing-er, is given little consideration.

For state representative, Mrs. Kearnes said she was against the legislative pay increase but did not believe that the recall was the proper way to go about it. She did not lend her name to any advertisement opposing the recall, however.

Bonneville Democrats classify Kugler as conservative but he apparently is acceptable to both the Hill and Just factions.

McAtee is considered by Bon-neville Democratic and Repub-lican leaders as belonging to the right wing faction and with lit-tle chance of appointment.

It is unfortunate that the recommendations were made at a closed meeting by pre-cinct committeemen who were elected by the people. It likely wouldn't have changed the nominee list but it appears in a matter of this type the pub-lic was entitled to know the votes each candidate received. Hill was justified in urging an open meeting.

Those at the meeting say the names of the six were announc-ed as receiving the majority from the 10 applicants but the number of votes each received was not given.

Fifteen of 17 precinctmen at-tended. There is a vacancy in one, No. 15, and one precinct committeeman, A. H. Bush, suf-fered a stroke a few hours pre-viously and was not able to at-tend. This meant that each nom-inee received a majority of at east eight.

The closed session, for examp-le, was in stark contrast with the recent Bonneville Democrat-ic Central Committee open meet ing which endorsed James Syme as county commissioner in an open roll call.

It was indeed fortunate that the law permitted a maximum of three to be nominated and thus avoided a far greater Bon-neville intraparty battle if only one for each position had been required. As it turned out, the two factions split fairly even on their recommendations.

Watson and Mrs. Kearnes were Just choices, Clarke, Mor-se and McAtee were favored by the Hill supporters while Kugler was acceptable to both groups.

The entire recall controversy will no doubt play a dominate role in the 1972 legislative elections, not only in Bonne-ville but many other counties. The appointees, of course, will hold an edge if they seek elec-tion in 1972. At that time, the people can decide the issue, just as they should have done without the attritious necessi-ty of the Aug. 10 recall elec-