

West Side Bloc a 'newspaper myth,'

By John Camper

Of Our Springfield Bureau

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Assistant House majority leader W.J. (Bingo Bill) Murphy has defended House Speaker W. Robert Blair and himself against charges that they are allied with the notorious West Side Bloc.

Newspapers have characterized the bloc as a rough element, often disloyal to the party and consistently opposed to bills designed to strengthen law enforcement and fight organized crime.

Murphy says this is not so. In a letter to all Republican House members, he called the bloc "an old newspaper myth" and castigated the "Chicago liberal news media" and "the liberal wing of the Republican Party" that purged several blocsters, including himself, from the party in 1964.

"If you did not vote the way the newspapers instructed you to vote or editorialized for on many issues, such as merit systems, gun laws, stop and

search laws or many other so-called 'reforms,' they would then say that you were a part of, or under the control of this supposedly big bad thing called the 'West Side Bloc,'" Murphy's letter said.

"As such, you were supposed to be against motherhood, little children and I guess the Pope," he said.

"THE ONLY 'West Side Bloc' I belong to, or have ever belonged to, is the West Side of Lake County, my own home district," said Murphy, who maintains an address in Antioch, Ill., but spends most of his time at the trailer camp he owns in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

"You better believe I am a block there! When I come out of West Lake County at election time, for 19 elections in a row, I come out like a block buster! With a vote lead that terrorizes my opposition!"

IN 1964, a Republican reform group led by Charles Percy (then a candidate for governor and now U.S. senator) and Richard B. Ogilvie (then Cook County sheriff and

now the immediate past governor) purged several blocsters from the House only to see them return two years later.

In addition to Murphy, those purged included Rep. Peter C. Granata, the bloc's acknowledged leader; Rep. Walter (Babe) McAvoy, and Rep. Louis Capuzi. The last three represent districts on the West Side of Chicago, hence their bloc's name.

Murphy seldom attended Republican conferences in the past and once received a \$15,000 unsecured loan from the late Democratic Sec. of State Paul Powell. Blair appointed him to the second highest post in the House GOP leadership.

McAVOY CAST the deciding vote for Powell for speaker in 1961 when Republicans controlled the House. Blair made

him chairman of the House Committee on Banks and Savings and Loans

Capuzi holds a \$7,332-a-year Democratic patronage job as deputy Cook County coroner and has been seen to vote with the Democrats at a nod of the Democratic leader's head. Blair appointed him chairman of the House Human Resources Committee.

Granata, Republican committeeman of Chicago's heavily Democratic 1st Ward, is now in his 37th year in the House. Blair made him vice

Murphy insists

chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. Blair, who has broken three promises he made to his oppo-

nents to win their support for speaker, was described in Murphy's letter as "a man of his word."