

Reports of Witness Tampering Heard in Noguchi Firing Case

Deputy County Counsel Charges That Investigators
for Coroner Are Questioning Employees at Their Homes

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Reports of attempts to tamper with prospective witnesses in the County Civil Service Commission hearing on the discharge of Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi were heard Wednesday in the Civic Center.

Godfrey Isaac, Dr. Noguchi's attorney, flatly denied them and called them "ridiculous."

The reports came after Isaac announced he may summon as many as 60 witnesses to the commission hearing scheduled for May 12 on Dr. Noguchi's discharge. Of these, 41 are employees in the coroner's office.

Dep. County Counsel Martin Weekes, who will handle the county's evidence against the ousted coroner, confronted Isaac before the commission's Wednesday meeting and asked:

"Were any promises made to witnesses from the coroner's office? Were there any offers of promotion? If this is true, I want it stopped."

Scoffs at Questions

Isaac scoffed at the questions and instantly brushed them aside.

Later Isaac said Weekes "likes to bug me and is not serious."

But Weekes again said, "If jobs were offered, it is a practice we intend to stop."

He said investigators for Isaac and Dr. Noguchi not only were questioning employees in the coroner's office in the daytime but also were "barging into their houses at night."

Weekes said he advised Herbert McRoy, administrative deputy in the coroner's office, to issue a memo that employees do not have to participate in interviews after working hours.

However, they are to participate in any interview requested during regular hours. The county will provide the time and space.

Isaac charged that the county had ordered none of its employees to talk unless a deputy county counsel is present.

Weekes replied that such a lawyer will be provided only if the employe requests one. He denied any smothering of interviews.

Isaac's list of 60 potential witnesses includes Dr. William Q. Sturner, visiting assistant professor at the University of Chicago and chairman of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences' pathology and biology section.

Others being considered include Dr. William G. Eckert of Wichita, Kan., and Dr. Cyril Wecht of Pittsburgh, former chairmen of this section; Police Chief Richard Conroy of Palos Verdes and Chief Dep. County Atty. Lars Pederson of Tucson, Ariz.

Weekes' witness list includes 14 employees of the coroner's office, two former employes and L. S. Hollinger, county chief administrative officer.

O. Richard Capen, Civil Service

Commission president, announced the three-member group voted unanimously to forbid live radio or television coverage of the discharge hearing.

Isaac pleaded for TV freedom but the commission was advised by County Counsel John D. Maharg that it is a quasi-judicial body with power under legislation and court rulings to prohibit it.

In another final stand, the commission agreed that Weekes, its former legal adviser, may handle the evidence against Dr. Noguchi. The commission now has a different deputy counsel as an adviser. Isaac sought a replacement for Weekes for the discharge hearing.