

Aide's Fear of Resignation by Noguchi Told

BY RICHARD WEST
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Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi's secretary cried "an awful lot" last Feb. 24 because she feared "pressure was being put on him to resign," a medical photographer told the hearing into Noguchi's dismissal Wednesday.

The photographer, Richard H. Kottke, said the secretary, Mrs. Ethel T. Field, told him she wanted to get up a petition on Noguchi's behalf to present to the County Board of Supervisors.

Mrs. Field, a Japanese-American, as is Dr. Noguchi, was one of the county's key witnesses against the fired coroner. She accused Noguchi of threatening to assassinate county officials and to kill her.

Fears Told

But last Feb. 24, Kottke testified before the Civil Service Commission in the Hall of Administration, Mrs. Field told him Noguchi "was being pushed into resigning, and she was afraid he was going to resign."

He said Mrs. Field asked him to read a draft of the petition she typed and that he suggested that she add that Noguchi should be retained as coroner for the benefit of "the citizenry of Los Angeles County."

Mrs. Field made this revision, Kottke said.

And Kottke said that another secretary in the office, Miss Eleanor Schmidt, who told the hearing earlier that No-

guchi once waved a knife and said it could be used to perform autopsies on living persons, offered to help circulate the petition.

Help Offered

Around this same time, Kottke went on, Dr. Russell Henry, now the acting coroner, told Noguchi he would cancel a trip to a convention in Chicago if he could do anything to help Noguchi.

Henry also has been called by the county as a witness against Noguchi.

Kottke said that on last New Year's Day he went to the coroner's office in the Hall of Justice with Noguchi and took pictures of overcrowded conditions there that Noguchi could use in making his budget requests.

Noguchi's attorney, Godfrey Isaac, entered as evidence the pictures which Kottke took.

They showed row after row of sheet-covered bodies, many of them influenza victims.

Struggle Cited

Kottke noted that "a good number of those gurneys contain not one body but two."

It has been Isaac's contention that Noguchi got into trouble with county officials because he fought so hard to obtain more personnel and equipment needed for his office.

On cross-examination, Dep. County Counsel Martin Weekes asked Kottke if Mrs. Field had not told him Feb. 24 that Dr. Noguchi had asked her to prepare the petition.

"No, she did not," Kottke replied.

The next witness in Noguchi's defense called by Isaac was Ralph Bailey, a senior coroner's investigator, who said he had served 18 years in the coroner's office under seven coroners.

Good 'Rapport'

Bailey said Noguchi "worked closer with the department than any other coroner."

While Noguchi was coroner, he said, there never was such a good "rapport" between the coroner and his staff.

He estimated that Noguchi worked "60 to 80 hours a week" during disasters.

Isaac asked Bailey if Noguchi had ever "bawled you out"?

Bailey replied that Noguchi had but that the coroner had been fair and right.

"That's the worst part," Bailey said. "He was right and I was wrong, and he let me know about it."