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**Hollinger Reputation
Involved in Noguchi
Hearing, Hahn Says**

BY RICHARD WEST

Times Staff Writer

Supervisor Kenneth Hahn warned Thursday that if the charges County Chief Administrative Officer L. S. Hollinger made against Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi are not substantiated, "Hollinger will be in a most difficult situation."

Hahn, testifying at the Civil Service Commission hearing into Noguchi's dismissal by the Board of Supervisors, said "the character and reputation of Mr. Hollinger are involved" in the hearing.

"The public wants to know what's going on," Hahn declared.

At a Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday, Hahn criticized the length of the hearing which is considering Noguchi's request that he be reinstated to the coroner's job. The hearing began May 12.

Other Hearings Held Possible

Hahn warned then that if the Civil Service Commission reinstates Noguchi, other hearings may be called for county officials who brought the charges.

And he testified Thursday, "The truth has to come out . . . I don't want the truth to be clouded by long hearings."

The supervisor said that when Hollinger first came to him with the startling . . . shocking . . . almost weird" accusations against Noguchi, Hahn felt they "should be kept a family affair, behind closed doors."

Hahn, who was called to testify by Noguchi's counsel, Godfrey Isaac said Hollinger told him he was so "physically afraid" of Noguchi that he kept "an armed deputy sheriff" in the office while talking to the coroner.

Questioned on Charges

Isaac asked Hahn if he believed the unsubstantiated charges Hollinger brought against Noguchi.

"Naturally, I believed him," the supervisor replied. "If you don't believe your chief administrative officer, he should be fired on the spot."

Isaac wanted to know if, before the Board of Supervisors voted 5 to 0

last March 18 to fire Noguchi, any of them had seen "one single statement purportedly taken under oath to support the accusations."

"None at all," Hahn said, noting that the board acted only on "the word of the chief administrative officer."

The supervisor continued: "I assume . . . the man who brings the facts to the board . . . has all the facts . . . I assume what he told us was true."

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Hahn said Hollinger told him that "Dr. Noguchi should be removed from office."

"I questioned . . . the judgment of the procedure," the supervisor said.

"I raised the question . . . 'Why shouldn't the Board of Supervisors hold the hearing on the charges before we discharge Dr. Noguchi?'"

But he said he was told by county "staff officers" that the usual procedure should be followed, that Noguchi should be fired first.

Hahn said he then agreed to this procedure.

Hahn questioned Hollinger "very carefully" about the charges, the witness said, and warned the chief administrative officer, "Lin, you've got to back this up."

"The charges were almost weird," Hahn said. "I didn't want to believe them about Dr. Noguchi," whose character and professional reputation he greatly admired up until this time.

Hahn said that both Hollinger and Herbert McRoy, chief administrative deputy in the coroner's office, said they "feared for their lives, and a disaster would happen unless Dr. Noguchi was removed."

"It was startling, it was shocking," the supervisor said.

Isaac asked Hahn if he

had ever observed Hollinger's demeanor when he made a recommendation and then the Board of Supervisors voted against it.

"I don't see his face . . . I imagine he doesn't like it," Hahn replied.

"Did you consider that perhaps Mr. Hollinger was not unbiased?" Isaac pressed.

"No . . . I knew that he felt that his life was in danger," the supervisor said.

Hahn became irked under this line of questioning and accused Isaac, "You're trying to trick me."

Isaac denied this and told Hahn, "You're sitting here as a citizen, not as a supervisor."

The lawyer also appealed to commission President O. Richard Capen to keep Hahn from answering "anything he pleases."

Although other witnesses in the hearing have been warned by the commission to respond only to the questions asked them, Hahn was allowed to say just about what he pleased.

Many parts of his answers had no apparent bearing on the questions asked by Isaac.

"I want to answer this man," Hahn angrily interrupted. The supervisor

then accused Isaac of "getting publicity."

Capen denied a motion by Isaac that parts of all Hahn's answers "not responsive" be stricken from the record.

Before this dispute erupted, though, Hahn said he did not believe any coroner in the United States had worked harder than Dr. Noguchi.

That is why when the accusations were first brought, Hahn said, he suggested to Noguchi that he change jobs "to get a hold of yourself."

"I asked him, 'Wouldn't you like to have another assignment?' He said, 'Yes.'"

Hahn said Noguchi agreed to go to Harbor

General Hospital as a deputy coroner.

The supervisor added that he hoped the change could be made "with no publicity involved," and that after six months, "if he took hold of himself, he could be returned to the (coroner's) job."

Hahn admitted he did not believe that Noguchi was too ill to take another pathologist job.

Isaac asked Hahn if he recalled that Hollinger recommended against Noguchi's request for more coroner's investigators and that the Board of Supervisors sided with Noguchi.

"I think we did," Hahn said.

Other witnesses called by Isaac included Dr. Arthur Koehler, a medical examiner in the coroner's office, and six veteran coroner's investigators who had worked under Noguchi.

All swore they had never seen any actions by Noguchi relative to the charges made against him—charges that he took drugs in excessive amounts, acted erratically, hoped and prayed for disasters, threatened persons and bullied employees.

Dr. Koehler said he observed in Dr. Noguchi "a dedication I had never seen prior to this time."

Senior Investigator Donald Drynan said Noguchi "tried to update the (coroner's) office to compare with other departments to better serve the public."

Investigator James Kono said morale in the office was "very good" under Noguchi's administration and that Noguchi donated to the office its first coffee urn, a heater for food, dishes, a radio, a microscope and "his own collection of (medical) books."

Elton Knowles, who retired as a coroner's investigator recently after 32 years in the office, described Noguchi as a "very dedicated, hard-working man."

Unlike previous coroners, Noguchi "would talk to you" about problems in the office, Knowles said.

The hearing will resume Monday at 9:30 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors hearing room in the Hall of Administration.