

Noguchi Coherent, Lucid at Meeting, Bradley Testifies

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BY RICHARD WEST

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City Councilman Thomas Bradley told the hearing into the dismissal of Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi Wednesday that he spent "several hours" with Noguchi Feb. 17 and found him coherent and lucid.

He said he noticed no signs of the rambling speech, disassociated ideas or erratic behavior which the county alleges Noguchi displayed around that time.

Bradley, called to testify on Noguchi's behalf at the Civil Service Commission hearing in the County Hall of Administration, said several other persons were present at the luncheon meeting at which Noguchi presided.

Reforms Reportedly Discussed

Much of his conversation with Noguchi, the councilman said, concerned proposed reforms of coroner's inquest procedures, including a bill on the matter pending in the Legislature.

"I have been concerned about reform of the whole inquest procedure," Bradley said as he was being interrogated by Noguchi's counsel, Godfrey Isaac.

The councilman said he told Noguchi he did not believe inquests were necessary, since district attorneys are not obligated to follow verdicts returned at inquests.

Dr. Noguchi, Bradley continued, said he favored inquest reforms but did not think inquests were unnecessary.

On cross-examination, Dep. County Counsel Martin Weekes asked Bradley if his conversation with Noguchi had not taken place at a mayoral campaign luncheon.

Japanese Sponsor Luncheon

Bradley replied that it had and that members of the Japanese-American community sponsored the luncheon.

The councilman lost to incumbent Sam Yorty in the mayoral election last week.

Bradley, a Negro, agreed to appear for Noguchi despite allegations by the county that the former coroner discriminated against a black aide.

Nothing pertaining to the alleged discrimination was brought up

during the questioning of Bradley.

Later, the three Civil Service commissioners, Isaac and Weekes conferred in private at the bench for nearly an hour in an effort to devise some means to speed up the hearing which is May 12.

Isaac said the commissioners sug-

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gested that the two lawyers stipulate, or make an agreement, on some matters so that the number of defense witnesses remaining to be called, and the testimony, could be reduced.

However, the defense lawyer said, Weekes would not agree to the "general stipulation"—not further explained—Isaac wanted.

Isaac said he told the commissioners he planned to move his remaining witnesses "as fast as I can" and that he "probably will pare down his list of 47 persons not yet called.

This was agreeable to the commission, Isaac said.

The defense counsel said it now looks as if he will be able to complete his case before the end of next week.

The subject of inquest procedures was taken up by another witness, Philip Barton, news director of KGFJ, a radio station which specializes in programs for blacks and other minority groups.

Barton said he had a number of discussions with Noguchi about a blue-ribbon citizens' committee the coroner wanted to set up to make inquests "more equitable for all people."

Noguchi, Barton said, believed the committee should be made up of persons from all walks of life, including minorities.

7 Members Planned

The committee was to have included seven members—one from each of the five county supervisorial districts, plus representatives from the dist-

trict attorney's office and the police or sheriff's departments, the witness said.

Weekes asked Barton if any committee members were ever appointed.

"Unofficially, one person," he replied. "Officially, I don't believe so."

Dr. George Schwartz, a cardiologist, testified that Noguchi told him Feb. 23 that he was "in a quandary—certain people were trying to throw him out of

his job and he just didn't know what to do."

Dr. Schwartz said he advised Noguchi to "fight by every means possible to retain his job" because the charges against him were "unwarranted."

Mrs. Elizabeth R. Palmer, senior medical secretary in the coroner's office, testified she asked another coroner's employe, Mrs. Nancy Palmer (no relation), about an identification test the county conducted in an effort to determine what kind of capsules Noguchi allegedly was taking.

Mrs. Nancy Palmer had taken part in the test—done with a box of different drug capsules which never were in Noguchi's possession—and identified a Dexamyl "pep" capsule as the same type she once saw in Noguchi's possession.

Mrs. Elizabeth Palmer said she "arose from my desk and confronted her" with this question: "Nancy, how could you put yourself out on a limb and testify about pills which Dr. Noguchi never had in his possession?"

"She responded," Mrs. Elizabeth Palmer said, "I only did what they—the county counsel—told me to do."

Veteran Employe

Weekes asked the witness if Mrs. Nancy Palmer had not meant that she had only taken the test as requested by the county counsel's office.

"She said nothing of the

kind, Mr. Weekes," replied the witness, a veteran of 21½ years in the coroner's office.

A previous witness, Miss Alice Jackson, a medical transcriber in the coroner's office, also testified she heard Mrs. Nancy Palmer say, "I only did what they told me to."

Two coroner's pathologists and four other staff members—three of them Negroes — also testified that they regarded Noguchi as an excellent chief who fought to better the office and their working conditions.

The hearing will resume at 9 a.m. today.