

USC Dean Blasts Procedure at Noguchi Dismissal Hearing

Says President of County Civil Service Commission Is Letting Himself Be Pushed Around by Opposing Counsel

BY RICHARD WEST
Times Staff Writer

L.A.T. —
An angry university dean charged Thursday that the president of the County Civil Service Commission was allowing himself to be "pushed around" by opposing lawyers at the hearing into the dismissal of Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi.

"I happen to know something about personnel law," declared Dr. Henry Reining Jr. of USC, where he is dean of the von KleinSmid Center for International and Public Affairs and professor of public administration.

Dean Reining, who has headed blue ribbon citizens' committees studying charter revisions for both the city and county, told commission President O. Richard Capen. "I don't know what kind of legal advice you're getting."

The dean, called by the county to evaluate the results of psychological tests given Noguchi, at one point in his testimony said it might be better if he were excused as he was "wasting the commission's time."

Upset by Repeated Objections

"I don't want to spend my time being pushed around by a couple of lawyers," Reining said. "I don't want to be on either side of this case. I know nothing about this case."

Dr. Reining became upset over repeated objections by Godfrey Isaac. Dr. Noguchi's attorney, to questions being asked the dean by

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Dep. County Counsel Martin Weekes.

Reining asked Isaac to "yield" so he could speak and he told Capen he was allowing the lawyers too much "leeway."

"I'm very much inhibited by these restrictions . . . I thought this was a Civil Service hearing, not a trial," the witness said.

Isaac interjected that he thought the commission was doing an excellent job in conducting the case, and Weekes tried to calm down the witness.

One of Isaac's objections which the commission sustained was a question by Weekes about whether Reining would recommend a supervisory appointment to a person who scored 68 in the manic-depressive area of a psychological test.

Weekes said this score was "very high" as the normal range was between 30 and 70.

When Isaac later asked Reining specific questions about the type of tests Noguchi took, the dean replied: "I don't know what you're talking about Mr. Isaac."

The witness protested that he was not a psychologist but "worked with these instruments (tests) through other people (psychologists)."

Weekes asked Reining if he would recommend a person to a high administrative post on the basis of the test scores Noguchi was given and the accusations against him.

Reining said he would not.

'Almost Every Criterion'

This data "certainly wouldn't qualify a man for a top-level executive position," the dean said. "On almost every criterion . . . there is negative evidence . . ."

"I would say he is not even borderline. I would disqualify him."

Isaac said that the test in question, the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory Test, does not contain a manic-depressive scale but a hypomania scale.

The hypomania scale is designed to measure a person's ambitions and

plans, the lawyer said.

Asked what hypomania means to him, Reining reiterated that he is "not a psychologist" but said he believes the term refers to an "abnormal drive."

Isaac corrected the witness, saying that hypomania is a lack of ambition, the opposite of hypermania.

The defense lawyer asked Reining if his opinion of Noguchi would be modified if he knew that the former coroner was "considered highly by his peers."

The dean said people often "act emotionally" in coming to the defense of someone in Noguchi's situation and that he would "want to look at other data also."

Continued from First Page

Isaac noted the large number of coroner's office employes who came forward to testify in Noguchi's behalf and he asked Reining's opinion of this.

"Popularity of an executive among the rank and file can be terribly important, but it can also go the other way," the dean said.

He added that some executives "would rather be popular than do a good job."

If law enforcement officers supported Noguchi, would that affect the dean's opinion? Isaac asked.

"Indeed it would," the witness said.

What about the commendations that Dr. Noguchi received while in office, including one from the Board of Supervisors? Isaac asked.

Reining said such commendations are "not firm data" and that "merely massing evidence is not conclusive."

And the massing of evidence against Noguchi would not be conclusive either? Isaac asked.

"No," Reining responded.

Another rebuttal witness called by the county, Dr. Alexander B. Caldwell, a psychologist on the staff of the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute, told about an "automated" analysis

he made of Noguchi's psychological test results.

He explained the scores were transferred to a profile sheet and then plotted on a graph against normal adult averages of such tests.

Noguchi's reactions, Caldwell said, tended to show he wanted to prove himself, was boastful and sought praise.

The psychologist concluded in his report on the Noguchi tests:

"Even though he may work in intense activity, he tests as having a good level of ego strength with a clearly favorable prospect for being an effective employe and remaining so."

The Noguchi tests, Caldwell said, showed "a quick tendency to be angry at people who would thwart him or block him."

The hearing will continue at 9:30 a.m. today in the County Hall of Administration.