



DIGEST

Around and About

A SUGGESTION from the 1967 county grand jury that three County employees be named to a CCC (Committee to Cut Costs) has been rejected by the Board of Supervisors. The jury report had proposed that two staffers from the CAO's office and one from the Auditor-Controller's office be detached from their duties for two years while they analyzed what County functions could be done more cheaply or could be eliminated. Supervisors observed that subordinate employees would find themselves in an awkward position if they criticized department heads or the Supervisors. Said Supervisor Ernest Debs: "If they came back after two years, they'd be in Siberia." Instead, the Board of Supervisors on January 16 approved a report of CAO Lin Hollinger recommending that the Citizens Efficiency and Economy Committee, study what County functions might be curtailed or eliminated; and that if other cost-cutting studies are required, they be done by hiring additional personnel in his management and budget divisions.

Continued on next page

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RETIRE-BY-65 PLAN BEING STUDIED

COUNTY TREASURER Harold Ostly has begun a study of whether the County should lower the compulsory retirement age for its employees from 70 to 65.

The plan also involves lowering the required age at which long-time employees may draw benefits—for example, a worker with 30 years service could retire at half pay at age 55, two-and-a-half years earlier than he now can retire at half pay.

The Board of Supervisors directed Ostly, who is also chairman of the County retirement board, to make the study and report back to them in time to establish the new system by January 1, 1969.

The Supervisors ordered the study under a law passed by the 1967 legislature. It permits counties to adopt the lower retirement age if they wish.

Deadline in 1974

The law provides that the retire-at-65 provision may not become effective for five years. This means that if the new system is adopted next January 1, any employee who is 65 or older on January 1, 1974, would have to retire. And thereafter any employee would have to retire the month after he becomes 65.

The Ostly study also will consider whether the earlier retirement system would require greater contributions by the employees and the County, and if so, how much greater.

Other changes in the county retirement law emerged from the 1967 legislature.

Deputy sheriffs, firemen, mar-

shals and life guards were given an earlier retirement age—50 instead of 55. This change went into effect last November 8.

The legislature also liberalized the law so that county employees who once worked for another municipal or state agency in California may be able to draw retirement benefits from the former employing agency, too.

Perhaps 700 affected

Ostly told the DIGEST:

"We estimate there are 300 to 700 people on the County staff who may be eligible under the new law for extra retirement allowances. Most of them withdrew their retirement money when they left their old jobs. Now they may be eligible to redeposit it and qualify themselves for retirement benefits for their early service."

Ostly urged that County employees who think they may be eligible should call at the Retirement Division, room 440, Hall of Administration.

Another Board of Supervisors' action affecting retired employees was reported in the Jan. 10 DIGEST—approval of a plan to permit the retirement benefit to be increased by up to 3 percent a year, if the Bureau of Labor Statistics index shows the cost of living has risen that much. Until now, the cost-of-living increase has been limited to 2 percent a year.

This action, too, was authorized by a 1967 legislative amendment to the county retirement law.

He Knew What He Wanted

Around and About

Continued from first page

PREPARATIONS ARE under way to present an Employee Relations Ordinance to the Board of Supervisors on February 6. The board asked for the ordinance after a stormy session January 9 when officials of the Los Angeles County Employees Association and the County Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO) became involved in strenuous debate before the board. An employee relations ordinance first was presented to the board on January 9, 1967. Revised versions were resubmitted last June, July and September. On each occasion, however, the Board of Supervisors delayed action because of objections from the employee organizations' spokesmen.

THE COUNTY'S so-called "bed tax" on hotel and motel bills will rise from 4 percent to 5 percent April 1 in unincorporated areas, bringing an added \$50,000 a year into the County coffers. The Board of Supervisors acted after hearing that the increase in the state-local sales tax to 5 percent last August had led several cities to boost their bed tax to the same level. The list included the City of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Palm Springs and Anaheim.

THE LATEST report of the California state personnel board shows Los Angeles County employees received pay increases this year higher than those for Los Angeles City workers but lower than those for San Francisco and state employees. Average raises were: for L.A. City 4.6 percent, for L.A. County 5.3

Continued on next page

DR. THOMAS Noguchi, the County's new chief medical examiner-coroner, says a tragedy in his father's office more than 20 years ago led him into his present job.

Tom, then a Japanese high school boy, was in the office as his father, a doctor, treated a husky man with a sore throat. As his father swabbed the throat with iodine, the patient suddenly collapsed and died before their eyes.

Their shock was heightened when local police and the district attorney suspected Tom's father of criminal negligence, perhaps by letting a cotton swab drop into the man's airway or lungs.

An autopsy cleared his father's name. It showed no swab, no negligence, and indicated the victim had died of natural causes.

From that day, Tom says, he knew he wanted to go into medico-legal medicine.

The incident took place in Yokosuka, a naval-base city south of Tokyo, where his father headed the ear-nose-throat department of a city hospital.

Of course, Tom had little choice but to go into medicine of some kind. As the eldest son, he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. ("If I had tried to do anything else, I would have been executed, or almost.")

Bombs and exams

But the road to his M. D. was not altogether easy. High school classes in the early 1940s were six-days-a-week affairs, interrupted often by dashes for the air raid shelter as American B-29s and P-38s visited Yokosuka. ("You wrote examination as fast as you could, before the next plane might come over.")

The last two years of the war, Tom went to premedical school in Tokyo, sometimes in partially wrecked buildings. ("After all, you don't really need a roof.") Power-short Tokyo cut off electricity to homes in the evening, so Tom often took his medical books and studied under a street light.

When Tom became Dr. Noguchi in 1951, he began his internship at Tokyo Imperial University hospital. But already he had begun casting eyes toward the United States, where he thought opportunities might be better in forensic medicine.

A San Francisco pathologist whom Tom had helped summers at the U.S. naval hospital in Yokosuka gave his young friend a directory of hospitals in the U. S. Tom wrote to 1,000 of them. Most of the replies said no, sorry, you are not a U. S. citizen. But Orange County General hospital waived the citizenship requirement. So Dr. Thomas Noguchi, age 26, emigrated to Southern California.

200 babies a month

He first was assigned to Orange County General's obstetrical ward, where he delivered up to 200 babies a month. ("Very educational experience, but it got repetitious, so I volunteered to work nights in the emergency ward—you know, traffic victims, beaten-up drunks, babies with pneumonia.")

Impatient to get into his chosen field of medico-legal medicine, Dr. Noguchi obtained a fellowship in pathology at Loma Linda University medical school. The next year he moved to the Barlow Sanatorium in Los Angeles to specialize in lung and heart x-rays. At the sanatorium he met a young microbiologist, Miss Hisako Nishihara, who now is not only Mrs. Noguchi but also Dr. Noguchi, teaching microbiology at Cal State Los Angeles.

Tom's pattern of rapid movement slowed the next year, 1956, when he became resident pathologist at White Memorial hospital. There he remained for five years until joining the staff of Dr. Theodore J. Curphey, County medical examiner-coroner in 1961.

Dr. Curphey's retirement last October 31 set off a tug of war over selecting his successor. After weeks of controversy, the Board of Supervisors, by a three to two vote, named Dr. Noguchi on December 19.

Continued on next page

A Family's Cost of Living—

L. A. NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL

THE FAMILY wage earner in the Los Angeles area may get stuck more for rent, transportation, clothing and medical care—especially medical care—but he still is better off than the worker in most major U. S. cities.

This picture emerges from the recently issued report "City Worker's Family Budget" by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. It compares living costs for a city family of four—working father, housewife mother, son aged 13 and a daughter, 8.

The study shows what the price tag was, as of late 1966, for them to maintain a moderate, comfortable standard of living, either renting or owning their home, having an automobile, taking part in community activities, and paying taxes.

The survey covered urban areas of all sizes—from small towns of 2,500 to New York City. Prices from all these were averaged to arrive at an index figure of 100 in comparing costs.

A Los Angeles family did a little better than the average on food expense (98 percent) and homeowner costs such as repairs, utilities, taxes (95 percent). But L.A. area

expenses were higher for clothing and personal care (106 percent), for transportation (107 percent), for rent (111 percent), and for medical care (134 percent). Los Angeles medical expense was the highest in the nation, followed by San Diego at 124 percent and San Francisco-Oakland, 118 percent.

As might be expected, living costs in small cities averaged about 10 percent lower than in big-city areas. Most of the difference came in cost of housing.

The following table indicates how costs for a family in the Los Angeles area compared with those in four other large Western metropolitan areas—Seattle, San Francisco-Oakland, San Diego, Honolulu—and five Eastern metropolitan areas—New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington.

The first column "Total" refers to all family expenses. The second and third columns show relative costs for food and housing, the two major budget items for most families.

Figures are in relation to an average of 100 for all urban areas, large and small.

RANK	TOTAL expenses	Food costs	Housing costs
1	Honolulu 122	Honolulu 119	Honolulu 129
2	New York 111	New York 111	Boston 123
3	Boston 110	Boston 108	New York 120
4	San Francisco-Oakland 108	Philadelphia 107	Chicago 115
5	Seattle 105	Seattle 106	San Francisco-Oakland 109
6	Chicago 103	San Francisco-Oakland 102	Washington 105
7	Los ANGELES 103	Washington 100	Seattle 104
8	Washington 102	Chicago 100	San Diego 100
9	San Diego 101	Los ANGELES 98	Los ANGELES 98
10	Philadelphia 100	San Diego 95	Philadelphia 96

DR. NOGUCHI

Continued from page 2

In his new post he will concentrate, he says, on two objectives. One is to develop an expanded computerized system for diagnosing causes of violent deaths. The other

will be a campaign to obtain voter approval next June of a \$2.8 million bond issue to erect the long-sought building for the coroner's department on the grounds of County General hospital. The department's staff of 120 now is packed into basement offices in the Hall of Justice.

Around and About

Continued from page 2

percent, for the State 5.5 percent, and for San Francisco 6.7 percent.

The state report identifies these four as the major competitors for governmental employees in California.

KAISER HEALTH Foundation has extended its deadline for re-enrollment to next Friday, February 2. The decision affects the approximately 11,000 County employees with Kaiser health insurance under one of the contracts between Kaiser and five employee unions and associations. When these five contracts expire April 1 Kaiser intends to transfer all enrollees to a new master contract with the County. To be transferred, however, each employee now covered must file a new form with Kaiser by next Friday. Enrollees who have not yet received a re-enrollment form from Kaiser should call 625-3611 extension 65667 for instructions.

THE COUNTY Engineer's office has begun studying the feasibility of remodeling the City's partially abandoned Lincoln Heights jail into a facility where the Sheriff could keep prisoners awaiting trial. The City housed up to 3,000 prisoners a day in the jail until mid-1965, when state law made the detention of sentenced prisoners a County function. However, under the more "spacious" standards of the California Department of Corrections, Lincoln Heights would have to be remodeled into an institution with room for only 1,435 prisoners. The County is considering whether to lease the jail from the City and remodel it. Reports on this from the County Engineer and CAO are due by April 30.

Here, Planners, the 1968 Holidays

THE PERSONNEL Department, thinking perhaps of those Monday-through-Friday employees who like to plan their three-day weekends far, far ahead, has issued a list of holidays for 1968.

The first long weekend will involve Lincoln's Birthday, Monday, February 12. Then comes a long dry spell until September, when two three-day weekends follow each other successively, with Labor Day on Monday, September 2 and Admission Day a week later on the 9th.

Veteran's Day on Monday, November 11, will provide the final long weekend.

Other County holidays, as specified by state law:

Washington's Birthday, Thursday, February 22.

Memorial Day, Thursday, May 30.

Primary election day, Tuesday June 4.

Independence Day, Thursday, July 4.

General election day, Tuesday, November 5.

Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 28.

Christmas, Wednesday, December 25.

Columbus Day, October 12, falls on Saturday, and so is not a holiday from work except for County Employees who regularly work Saturdays.

County offices, as usual, will close from noon until 3 p.m. on Good Friday, April 12.

County of Los Angeles

D I G E S T

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25 Legislators Hear County's Plea

COUNTY OFFICIALS have launched a drive in Sacramento aimed largely at preventing future rises in the County property tax rate.

The five County supervisors and CAO Lin Hollinger lunched in Sacramento January 15 with 25 of the senators and assemblymen from Los Angeles county.

The supervisors made clear that their No. 1 objective is a bill that would funnel into county treasuries the \$155 million in state sales taxes earmarked for property tax relief.

Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh warned the supervisors that the counties face stiff competition for the \$155 million from school forces. And he pointed out Governor Ronald Reagan has suggested the money might be used for junior college districts and secondary schools.

If the legislature were to allot the \$155 million to the 58 counties, it would mean an estimated decrease of \$75 million next year in L. A. County property taxes.

The supervisors also urged that the legislature give counties greater freedom to levy sales, cigaret and other non-property taxes—and to do this on a countywide basis instead of only in unincorporated areas. These areas are shrinking, they pointed out, and incorporated cities are getting most of the revenue from such taxes.

If this request is turned down, County officials said they will ask for a county income tax to be collected "piggyback" style with the state income taxes.

A switch in welfare?

Guests at the Sacramento luncheon also brought up the possibility of transferring the administration of all welfare programs from the County to the state, as provided in the Burton-Ralph bill introduced two weeks ago. Its sponsors say the move would lift more than \$90 million a year from L. A. County property taxes. These figures are being checked by the CAO's office.

Under the proposal, social workers, welfare clerks and others employed in the County welfare operation would become state employees.

County officials also requested backing for a bill to permit merging the Marshal department's court bailiffs and process servers into the Sheriff's staff. The Citizens Economy and Efficiency Committee has estimated the consolidation would eliminate 110 positions and save \$1.4 million a year.

In the G-NOTE CLUB

Introducing County employees whose better-work suggestions have won them \$100 and membership in the Century Note Club.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S investigator Stanley Robertson is \$100 richer because he knew how to save words.

Stanley bent his critical attention on the Western union telegram that the D.A.'s trial liaison section was sending out to 200 or more witnesses each month—witnesses who had no telephones—advising them that a trial had been postponed. The form telegram read:

"D. A. No. 1234. Trial of John Doe postponed. You are excused as witness February 10 Department 100 but will be needed later date."

Stanley suggested new wording that cut the length of the wire almost in half:

"John Doe trial postponed. Witnesses excused February 10 Department 100. You'll be resubpoenaed."

Stanley also reduced the length of another form telegram sent to establish contact with witnesses who had left the state. This one he cut from 69 words to 41.

Estimated savings to the County the first year: \$2,770 for both telegrams.

The Suggestion Award Board granted Stanley \$100.