



# DIGEST

## *Around and About*

THE CIVIL service commission will hear arguments April 17 on a proposal to let any employee who is suspended appeal his case to the commission, no matter how brief his suspension may be. Many unions and employee associations have urged the change in rule 19.01 which now provides that an employee may appeal only a suspension longer than ten days (except that an appeal is allowed for any suspension if it arose from discrimination because of "race, color, religious or political opinions or affiliations, employee organization or union affiliation, national origin, or sex.") The commission announced any suggestions as to the rule change must be submitted at the commission office by next Friday (March 21) if it is to be considered at the April 17 hearing. The commission said suggestions also may be offered on any of its other rules for April 17 discussion.

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## ERCOM HITS SLOW GOING

THE EMPLOYEE relations commission, feeling its way in an area new to County government, has begun what now promises to be a lengthy task of approving representation units among County employees.

The commission (ERCOM) has completed hearings on one petition for a unit, has hearings in progress or scheduled on four other petitions. There were, at press time, 45 petitions remaining to be scheduled for hearing, with more expected to be filed.

The ordinance creating ERCOM requires it to hold public hearings before deciding whether units proposed by employee organizations contain the proper employee groups.

### *Questions, questions*

When ERCOM began its public hearings Feb. 6, it had fewer than 30 petitions before it. The three commissioners expected to meet one afternoon each week and to complete hearings on two petitions each afternoon. This plan had to be abandoned almost immediately, as the hearings developed into "court sessions" with attorneys and representatives for contending employee organizations placing witnesses on the stand and questioning them for hours about their duties and work conditions. Deputy County counsel Lawrence Hoffman, representing the department of personnel, also questioned witnesses.

The hearing on petition number 1—AFSCME council 49's petition for a unit of 178 superior court clerks

—began Feb. 6 with AFSCME and intervening Los Angeles County Employees association as rivals. The hearing was completed Feb. 13. ERCOM has taken the case under submission.

Petition number 2 was withdrawn.

A hearing began Feb. 20 on petition number 3, AFSCME'S request for a unit of 75 sewer maintenance men, laborers and other engineering department employees. LACEA intervened, the Building Trades council participated as an interested party. That hearing resumed Feb. 27 and has been further continued until March 20 (to permit AFSCME's attorney to take a long-planned vacation).

Hoping to speed work on its fast-growing backlog of petitions, ERCOM began Feb. 27 and 28 a routine of two all-day sessions a week instead of only one weekly meeting.

Hearings were held March 5 and 6 on County Employees union local 434 petition (number 6) for a unit of 196 x-ray technicians. The hearing was continued to March 13. LACEA is intervening.

### *Probation unit*

The commission is scheduled to begin a hearing today (March 14) on petition number 4 by AFSCME for a unit of 1,700 probation officers and ten probation nurse counselors. LACEA is competing for the probation officers, California Nurses' asso-

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## Around and About

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A STATE court of appeal has ruled that the County had the right in June 1966 to cancel certain fringe benefits (anniversary dates, accumulated vacation and sick leave) of social workers who went on strike. The court also held (Feb. 27) that the Board of Supervisors was entitled to grant an extra-work-load bonus to social workers and clerks who remained on the job. The justices declined to rule on the question of whether public employees have the right to strike.

David Novogrodsky, director of Social Workers union local 535, told *The Digest* his organization is appealing the decision.

FLOOD CONTROL staffers recall wryly that on Jan. 17 they received forecasts from both their private weather consultant and the U. S. weather bureau indicating little or no rain for the next five days. Rain began falling the next day and continued intermittently until Jan. 26, producing the greatest nine-day downpour on record — 14 inches average in the valleys, 35 inches in the mountains. Flood-fighting became a round-the-clock ordeal for hundreds of workers, not only in flood control but in the road, sheriff's, fire and health departments. Emergency crews are still repairing damage and

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## SLOW GOING

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ciation for the ten nurse counselors.

The largest unit yet proposed—local 434's petition number 8 for more than 8,000 hospital attendants, vocational nurses, food and laundry workers, and others—is set for two days of hearing March 26 and 27.

It is expected that local 434's petition number 7 for a unit of 71 hospital pharmacists will come next on the hearing schedule, probably in early April.

Employee organizations filed 15 new petitions to form representation units with ERCOM from Feb. 24 until last Tuesday (March 11)—half of them from LACEA. All previous petitions were listed in the Feb. 28 issue of *The Digest*.

New filings include:

Petition No. 52—California Association of Professional Employees (CAPE) for 46 administrative engineering employees in eight departments. LACEA later filed an intervenor petition, indicating it intends to compete for the unit.

No. 53—California Property Consultants association (formerly California Property Investigators association) for 63 property investigators in DPSS. LACEA intervened.

No. 54—LACEA for 7,566 maintenance men, truck drivers, garage and parking attendants, building crafts workers, food service workers, housekeepers, custodians, power equipment workers and others in hospitals, road, flood control, mechanical and 24 other departments. Local 434 and AFSCME intervened.

No. 55—LACEA for 700 foremen and supervisors in hospitals, flood control, parks, mechanical and 24 other departments. Local 434 and CAPE intervened.

No. 56—AFSCME for 670 probation department office workers. LACEA intervened.

No. 57—Social Workers local 535 for 6,030 social workers, welfare

assistants and others in DPSS and the department of adoptions. LACEA intervened.

No. 58—Health Department Public Health Investigators association for 69 public health investigators. LACEA intervened.

No. 59—Public Health Engineering association for seven industrial hygienists and a chemical engineer in the health department. LACEA intervened.

No. 60—California Association of Medical Laboratory Technologists for 390 laboratory technicians in hospitals, health, sheriff's and probation department. LACEA intervened.

No. 61—LACEA for 1,814 medical technicians, vocational nurses, sanitarians and others in hospitals, health, probation, sheriff's, coroner, personnel, DPSS, mental health and veterinarian departments.

No. 62—LACEA for 160 supervising medical technicians, chief sanitarians and others in hospitals, DPSS, coroner, sheriff's, health and personnel departments.

No. 63—LACEA for 3,214 attendants, laboratory assistants, ambulance drivers, pharmacy helpers and others in hospitals, veterinarian, health, agricultural commissioner, coroner, probation, sheriff's and mental health departments.

No. 64—LACEA for 462 therapists, psychologists, pharmacists, dentists, dietitians and others in hospitals, health, DPSS, probation, sheriff's, veterinarian and mental health departments.

No. 65—LACEA for 262 supervisors among physicians, pharmacists, therapists and others in hospitals, probation, health, coroner, sheriff's, personnel, DPSS and mental health departments.

No. 66—Supervising Deputy Probation Officers' association for 225 supervising DPO's.

## Nobody Will Be 'Swallowed' -- Nesvig

DIRECTOR OF personnel Gordon Nesvig moved this week to allay fears expressed by some County employees that they will be "swallowed up" against their will into employee organizations that the employee relations commission (ERCOM) may certify as negotiating representatives.

The commission has begun hearings on petitions filed by 18 unions and associations seeking to form representation units that would include about half the County's 61,000 employees.

Nesvig earlier (DIGEST, Feb. 28) assured employees that if their jobs are included in any proposed unit approved by ERCOM, the employees will have a chance to vote in a secret election to decide what organization, if any, shall be the unit's majority representative for negotiating purposes. Nesvig said:

"When this process has been gone through—that is, ERCOM has decided what classes of employees logically belong in a unit, and the unit has had an election to decide what organization shall be its majority representative — after this each employee still will have freedom to choose whether he wishes to belong to the union or association that is certified."

Nesvig pointed to section 4 of the employee relations ordinance which reads:

"Employees of the County shall have the right to form, join and participate in the activities of employee organizations of their own choosing for the purpose of representation on all matters of employee relations. Employees of the County also shall have the right to refuse to join or participate in the activities of employee organizations and shall have the right to represent themselves individually in their employment relations with the County. No employee shall be interfered with, intimidated, restrained, coerced or discriminated against because of his exercise of these rights."

Nesvig also said that while section 9 of the ordinance specifies that only organizations certified as

majority representatives of a unit of employees may negotiate on wages and conditions of employment, the section adds: "This shall not preclude other employee organizations, or individual employees, from conferring with management representatives on employee relations matters of concern to them."

### C-NOTE CLUB

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

FOR YEARS, each real property transaction in Los Angeles county had gone routinely through the assessor's computer where one step was to order a "sales verification" letter sent to the new owner, asking him what the sales price had been and other information to help the assessor determine the property's value for taxing purposes.

Unfortunately, not all the transactions involved sales to new owners. About 15 percent of them represented only changes of name within a family or some other non-sale transaction. When these people received a letter beginning "Official records indicate that you are the new owner of . . ." the telephone in the assessor's office began to ring. Or an indignant letter arrived in the mail. Thousands of these calls and letters had to be answered. A backlog of them piled up.

Frances Brown, an intermediate supervising clerk in the assessor's mapping services division, devised a simple solution.

She proposed that documents in a non-sale transaction should be marked with a red letter "A." This would alert the computer operator not to include this name to receive a sale verification letter. Her suggestion went into use last May 1.

The CAO estimated her idea will save \$33,000 this year in employees' time (3.34 positions eliminated), postage and telephone bills.

The Suggestion Award board voted Mrs. Brown an initial award of \$100. She will receive an additional award after May 1 when actual annual savings of her suggestion can be calculated.

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removing debris on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. . . meanwhile keeping fingers crossed and a worried eye on the sky.

A MAJOR addition to the County's superior court system will be dedicated in Pomona civic center March 24. The \$6.1 million east district courts building, seven stories high, will house 13 courtrooms and branch offices for the D-A, County clerk, sheriff, public defender and probation department. The adjacent parking lot has 132 spaces. The County has six other district superior court operations—in Norwalk, Long Beach, Torrance, Santa Monica, Van Nuys and Pasadena. The CAO's office is about to start plans for another in Compton.

The Board of Supervisors also has given the go-ahead (March 4) for a new sheriff's station in Carson, near Avalon boulevard and Carson street. The station is intended to take some of the law enforcement load in the southwest section of the county from the sheriff's overcrowded Lennox and Firestone stations.

REMINDER FOR travelers: today (March 14) is the day higher allowances go into effect for out-of-town trips on County business—\$10 a day limit for meals and \$12 a night for hotel room (up to \$20 a night if the returning traveler brings a receipt from the hotel).

## 2 Department Heads Bow Out

ROBERT HARDON's long career as the County's Mr. Clean will end March 30. On that day he will retire as director of building services after 43 years on the staff.

He began in 1924 as an elevator operator in the Hall of Justice, became Superintendent of Janitors and Elevator Services in 1942, when his work force numbered 167. Today his renamed department totals 1,297 custodians — not janitors (Hardon got the title changed in 1963). His army cleans nine million square feet each night in the 272 buildings the County owns and leases.

Hardon, 68, says he has two ambitions: to devote himself to church work and the Boy Scouts, and to take a trip around the world.

The Board of Supervisors (Feb. 18) named Hardon's assistant, William Prater, to become acting director upon Hardon's retirement, pending a civil service examination to choose his successor.

## GRAND JURY GETS COUNTY REPLY

THE COUNTY has made its annual response, as required by law, to the 1968 county grand jury's final report on County operations.

The 66-page document deals largely with comments on welfare, courts, jails and juvenile halls. The Board of Supervisors voted Feb. 18 to send it on to the grand jury.

The jury's finding that the County clerk has insufficient space to handle criminal exhibits drew this reply:

"We have assigned more storage space for exhibits at 330 North Broadway (Hall of Justice annex) . . . In addition, the jury assembly room in the Hall of Justice will be assigned to the County clerk for intake of exhibits at the conclusion of the Sirhan trial . . . This will provide enough storage space until the opening of the new Criminal Courts building."

Both the Supervisors and sheriff Peter Pitchess agreed with the grand jury suggestion that there

MARVIN THRONDSO, director of the animal control department, is saying goodbye to executive cares to become a rancher. His retirement is effective March 30.

When Thronpson, in his mid-twenties, joined the County as a deputy poundmaster in 1937, the County had no animal shelters. It contracted with six humane societies to care for its "guests."

Four years later, when the pound department was established, Thronpson took the civil service examination and was named poundmaster. He left in 1944 to ranch near Beaumont, but when poundmaster Gilbert Kress died, Thronpson returned to the post in 1946. The County then was building its first animal shelter in Downey.

A civil service departmental promotional exam to choose Thronpson's successor is expected shortly.

Meanwhile, Thronpson, 58, is departing for his 200-acre spread near Exeter, northeast of Bakersfield, which he will run with his two grown sons. They will raise fruit. No animals.

be a pool of bailiffs to serve all superior courts instead of the present pattern of one bailiff to each court. The jury also proposed economies by discontinuing the use of jury guards. But Pitchess and Board members pointed out both these changes have been opposed by the court judges.

The grand jury revived an earlier proposal for consolidating the sheriff's and marshal's bailiffs into the sheriff's department along with all civil process serving. The Supervisors' reply: "We welcome the grand jury's continuing support of the Board's position on this important issue. However, in view of the strong opposition to such merger, favorable legislation appears unlikely at this time."

The Board assured the grand jury that steps already have been taken to simplify and speed up the paying of mileage claims by some 800 sheriff employees. Many claims previously had been delayed.

## Letters

To The DIGEST:

This is a good time to urge every County employee to retain—for the whole year—the "statement of earnings" attached to his payroll warrant. We have been receiving a heavy flow of calls from employees questioning the accuracy of their W-2 forms for income taxes. If the caller had retained his paycheck stubs, he would have the answer at his fingertips.

In addition, the stubs would tell him how much he had paid for A.I.D., health insurance premiums and union dues—all worthwhile information when itemizing tax deductions. The stubs also can be used when checking retirement fund contributions. All in all, these stubs are one of the most valuable records an employee can keep.

Incidentally, The DIGEST on Feb. 10, 1968, published an article "How to Read Your Paycheck Stub." It might be helpful if you would re-run an updated version of this.

MARK BLOODGOOD  
Auditor-Controller

*(You may have a good suggestion there. We'll do it.—EDITOR.)*

County of Los Angeles

## DIGEST

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