

Prosecutions Increasing, District Attorney Reports

(Editor's note: This is the first in a three-part series on local activities of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.)

During a recent 12-month period, the Torrance branch office of the district attorney, Room 190, Torrance-South Bay County Building, 825 Maple Ave., considered 5,964 misdemeanors, and 4,726 felonies, a 29.4 per cent increase, according to District Attorney Evelle J. Younger and Moses E. Howard, chief deputy.

The local office serves Torrance, Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, Gardena, Palos Verdes Estates, Lawndale, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Lomita, Lennox, and adjacent unincorporated area.

There are 16 deputy district attorneys, 10 clerical personnel, and 3 investigators serving four Municipal Court divisions and seven Superior Court departments.

IN 1967, the office was moved to the new courthouse in Torrance and the South Bay area office, located in Redondo Beach, was closed. At the same time a new area office was opened in Inglewood.

Younger noted that during the same period, 32,954 applications for felony complaints were considered at branch and area offices, including the local office. This was 56 per cent of the total handled by the district attorney.

Branch and area office felony volume increased 22 per cent over the preceding period, he revealed in the department's recently published annual progress report.

IN THE introduction to the report, Younger noted that "the district attorney is charged with the responsibility for the prosecution of all felonies that occur within the county."

"He has also the duty to prosecute all misdemeanors in the unincorporated areas of the county and in cities that have no city prosecutor."

Younger indicated that 1967 was "another year of expansion . . . caused by increased felony and misdemeanor filings."

Some of the highlights cited by Younger include the "on call" witness plan designed to reduce the inconvenience and loss of time suffered by citizens who are required to attend criminal proceedings as witnesses; a self-inspection program to modernize the county department; and the addition of a research consultant "to better analyze existing policies and procedures."

HE ALSO cited community relations programs, including the District Attorney's Advisory Council and the Young Citizens Council.

Younger said that since publication of the report, the district attorney office has been reorganized and that three bureaus have been established.

The bureaus include central operations, consisting of preliminary, complaint and trials divisions and the juvenile section; branch and area offices with jurisdiction over various branch offices; and special operations, which includes appellate, major fraud and child support divisions, research and training, extradition, medicolegal and psychiatric sections and the County Grand Jury advisor.

The current annual report, he added, is based on the organization of the district attorney's office prior to July 1, when the bureaus were instituted.

SOME OF the activities noted by Younger in the report:

Trials—Prior to the reorganization, there were four sections, dealing with trials, extradition, psychiatric and medicolegal.

The trials section is responsible for the processing of all felony criminal matters in the Central District of Los Angeles County Superior Court, except those prosecuted by the major frauds and special investigations division.

The extradition section specializes in the extradition of fugitives from any juris-

dition in the world outside of California. The primary duty is to maintain a system which will enable the district attorney to effect the return of fugitives from justice to this county for trial.

Younger explained that there is no common law of extradition and that the rules are derived from constitutional and statutory sources, and from agreement between states and treaties

between the U.S. and other countries.

THE PSYCHIATRIC section represents the people's interest in cases involving civil insanity, mentally disordered sex offenders, alcoholics, habit-forming drugs and narcotics commitments to the California Narcotic Rehabilitation Center.

Additionally, the section represents the people in all

jury trials arising out of a commitment by the psychiatric court.

The medicolegal section identifies, investigates and prosecutes crimes having difficult or complex medical-legal problems.

Complaint, city preliminary division—The complaint section is responsible for the filing of all felony complaints arising in the Central District, and noted

a 28 per cent increase last year.

Younger explained that the "rise in crime has understandably increased the flow of police officers seeking complaints."

The priors unit has the job of searching records of all defendants and sometimes witnesses to see if they have any prior felony convictions.

Members of this unit obtain their information from the FBI and the California Bureau of Criminal Identification.

DEPUTIES from this division also provided for Juvenile Court proceedings. The basic purpose of this is to assist the court by presenting the evidence in support of petitions filed by the Probation Department. The district attorney ap-

pears at his discretion and with the consent of the Juvenile Court judge or referee. The DA functions essentially as in any adult court trial.

Primary function of the preliminary section is the processing of felony cases arising in the Central District through arraignment and preliminary hearing and the preparation and filing of information in Superior Court.

This also involves presenting evidence and representing the people at hearings on defendants' motions for reduction of bail, motions to dismiss based on unreasonable delay in prosecuting, etc.

(Next week—Child support, major frauds, appellate, bureau of investigation, research and training)

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