

Coroner seeks end of autopsy contract

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SAN BERNARDINO — Coroner Bill Hill said Wednesday he will ask the Board of Supervisors today to terminate a \$120,000-a-year county autopsy contract held by Drs. Irving Root and Wayne Scott "because you've just got to have credibility."

Hill said he reached that decision Wednesday when he received a letter from Scott saying he may have made errors in the 1977 autopsy of Beverly Wise, murdered in March of that year.

The letter read in part, "I decided not to file an

amendment (to the Wise autopsy report) . . . (But) had I filed an amended report it would essentially say: 'The description of uninjured abdominal organs may be inaccurate.'

"The report should properly read, 'abdominal organs not injured are essentially normal to inspection or palpation,'" which means they were normal to the touch but may not have been surgically cut and internally studied.

When told of his decision, "Dr. Scott said he was relieved. And that he would accept the termination without the 30-day waiting period provided in the contract," Hill said.

That means that Scott, 57, who has done autopsies for the county coroner's office the past 17 years, may do his last autopsies this coming weekend. Scott could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Hill said "it is very likely that Dr. Root will be kept on to do autopsies. The board will probably terminate this joint contract that we have with them now and then rehire Root on a separate contract."

Besides the Wise autopsy, Scott's credibility was questioned earlier this year because of his autopsy report on a Fontana murder victim in 1979.

Scott was the key figure in a story The Sun published Wednesday, which said the coroner's of-

fice in February asked the Police Department to return its copy of the Wise autopsy report, because it was suspected of being faulty. Police said they refused the request.

Police Chief B. Warren Cocke said Wednesday he was "satisfied" with the decision to terminate Scott's contract.

While he said there was "no reason to jump up and down and be happy they got rid of Scott," he said that "whenever a person's credibility is attacked and/or sustained, it then may be better to replace

(Continued on A-2, column 2)