

#12

9/23/69

Memorandum 69-120

Subject: Study 12 - Jury Instructions

At the September meeting, the Commission decided not to drop the study relating to taking instructions into the jury room. The staff was directed to prepare materials that might be sent out to trial judges and others for comment and to present this material to the Commission at a future meeting. The staff was also to suggest persons who might be sent the tentative recommendation.

Attached is a letter of transmittal, the tentative recommendation, and background material that might be sent out.

The staff has discussed this topic with Jon Smock of the Judicial Council (Ralph Kleps is on vacation until the middle of October). Jon indicated that we could use the address plates of the Judicial Council to distribute the tentative recommendation to about 100 trial judges. This would provide the presiding judges and some other judges with a copy of the material.

Also the staff suggests we send the material to the State Bar (CAJ) and to the California Trial Lawyers Association and the Association of Defense Counsel for comment.

Respectfully submitted,

John H. DeMouilly
Executive Secretary

CALIFORNIA LAW REVISION COMMISSION

SCHOOL OF LAW
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The Legislature has directed the Law Revision Commission to make a study to determine whether the jury should be authorized to take a written copy of the court's instructions into the jury room in civil as well as in criminal cases. The Commission would like to know your views on this question.

Enclosed are the following materials:

- (1) Tentative Recommendation Relating to Taking Instructions Into the Jury Room in Civil Cases
- (2) Background material consisting of (a) letter from a woman who served on a jury (pink), (b) editorial written by a lawyer who served on a jury (yellow), (c) letter from a justice of the Court of Appeal, commenting on the difficult task jurors face (green), (d) Illinois Practice Act § 67 which requires that the jury be provided with a written copy of the instructions (gold), and (e) Recommendation and Study published by the Commission in 1957 (blue pamphlet).

The Commission is requesting that trial judges and attorneys review the tentative recommendation so that their comments may be considered before the Commission determines what recommendation, if any, it will submit to the Legislature. We need your comments by November 15, 1969. We hope you will be willing to assist us in this study.

Yours truly,

John H. DeMouilly
Executive Secretary

June 25, 1969

2. The law regarding civil cases does not permit the jury to receive written instructions.

Why not? Are civil cases not important? Shouldn't the jurors be given all the facts on which to make their decision and be absolutely clear on the laws governing the particular case?

Jurors cannot remember everything the judge reads in his instructions, memories are faulty, and even if one takes notes in shorthand (as I did during my second case), one cannot take down everything.

3. Evidently, some judges feel that providing written instructions to the jurors merely adds to the confusion!

That argument is positively irrational. Is the thinking behind that "Don't confuse me with the facts"? Why, then, instruct the jury at all? If this argument means that people in general are too dumb to understand, why have juries? I disagree with this line of "thinking." I believe in the jury system but it should be made more efficient, and you do not increase efficiency by putting up obstacles.

It is extremely important for jurors to have as much information as is reasonably possible in order for them to reach a fair verdict, and I do not think they should have to ask for it. It would be a simple and not very costly matter (indeed, lack of confusion might prevent costly retrials caused by hung juries) to provide jurors with a written copy of the judge's instructions. Whether or not they refer to it is up to them, but at least they would have the information readily available. Reconvening the Court to have instructions reread is a time-consuming procedure and not satisfactory for reasons given herein.

I urge you to request that the Legislature change the California laws so that written instructions are automatically provided to jurors in both civil and criminal cases at the start of jury deliberations.

Very truly yours,



Miss Sara Jane Long

cc: Judge Lyle E. Cook
Hon. Don Mulford
Hon. Nicholas C. Petris
Hon. Lewis F. Sherman

Oregon State Bar BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

Your editor had an unusual and rewarding experience during the month of November in serving on the jury panel for Multnomah county. This opportunity seldom comes to a lawyer, but when and if such an opportunity does come we urge every lawyer to take advantage of it.

Serving on a jury may not do anything for the individual lawyer's ego, but it does acquaint him with some of the facts of life which are frequently forgotten at the counsel table.

While it might be interesting to recite what some jurors thought about some lawyers as revealed in jury room deliberations, it is not the purpose of this editorial to do so.

Much to the surprise of your editor, every juror with whom he came in contact was greatly interested in the instructions given by the court. The great difficulty was that they had trouble remembering

what the judge had said and time after time the jurors wanted to know why when the judge was reading the instructions the text could not have been sent to the jury room with the pleadings, as is done in several other states.

It is the opinion of your editor that this is a simple change in our procedure which would greatly improve the jury system. Jurors, we have found, are honest and try to the best of their ability to follow the law as the court has presented it. However, it is impossible for a group of laymen—and not easy for a lawyer—to remember all of a half hour recital of the law to be applied in any particular case.

Jurors with whom we served were particularly complimentary of those judges who at least appeared to be closely following the case as though it was the first case they had ever tried and who gave their instructions slowly in a clear, loud voice with emphasis upon those parts which were especially pertinent.

Much to the surprise of your editor, he found that the jurors carefully observed the admonishment of the court to disregard testimony where an objection had been sustained. Jurors are quick to recognize a deliberate attempt to plant some statement in the minds of the jury even though the court may direct that the testimony be disregarded. The jurors are inclined to deliberately disregard such statement and also practically everything else that the offending attorney says.

For what it may be worth, your editor passes along this suggestion: "If you can help it, don't let your client testify to something that is patently untrue or impossible." A party who testifies that he was driving at exactly 30 miles an hour when he hit a parked vehicle after skidding 75 feet on dry pavement with sufficient force to knock the standing vehicle across the street and through a brick wall, is quickly identified by the jurors for exactly what he is and from then on out he is behind the eight ball.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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LEONARD M. FRIEDMAN
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

June 6, 1969

California Law Revision Commission
School of Law
Stanford University
Stanford, Calif. 94305

Attention: John H. DeMouilly
Executive Secretary

Gentlemen:

This letter is stimulated in part by recent work on litigation involving the "dangerous conditions" provisions of the 1963 tort liability legislation and your May 15, 1969, bulletin on the same subject. My comments are aimed at these provisions as drawn, rather than at the tentative amendments.

These statutes have their practical and most frequent application in the trial court and particularly in the jury room. For every appellate court that expatiates on these statutes, a dozen juries will apply them - or try to. If they are not meaningful to a jury, they fail in their prime purpose.

In my opinion no trial judge and no committee of trial judges can frame instructions making these tort liability statutes meaningful to 12 lay jurors. The BAJI committee has struggled manfully with the task. The fact that their suggestions communicate a single liability or immunity concept only through the medium of a half dozen interlocking instructions is no fault of the BAJI committee. It is the fault of the statutes.

Unfortunately, most statutory draftsmen have never entered a jury room. Many have not observed a jury trial. It is empty optimism to expect a jury to absorb and apply the interlocking statutory concepts of the tort liability law.

For example, a highway liability case might require the jury to recall and apply in combination instructions incorporating Government Code sections 830, 830.2, the second sentence of 830.8, 835(b), 835.2(b) and 835.4(b). Is not this a mountainous, practically impossible task for any 12 jurors?

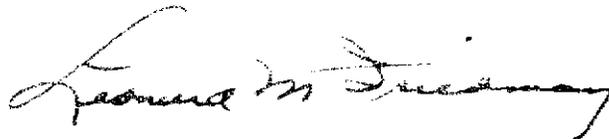
California Law Revision Commission
Attention: John H. DeMouilly

6/6/69

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"He jests at scars that never felt a wound," and I hasten to tell you that I have drafted legislation in past years. I do not minimize the draftsman's task. I think that the difficulties are increased when ideas are strung out through a series of statutory statements, when a concept in one statute depends on definitions in a second and qualifications in a third. They are lessened when a jury can decide a case on a self-contained rule. The latter alternative multiplies the number of available rules and requires a refined selection of the appropriate one by the trial judge. Nevertheless, I think we ought to give these 12 laymen a chance to do a rationally acceptable job.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Leonard M. Friedman".

Leonard M. Friedman
Associate Justice

LMF:zm

**§ 67. (Civil Practice Act, § 67). Instructing the jury—
Taking instructions and papers to the jury room**

(1) The court shall give instructions to the jury only in writing, unless the parties agree otherwise, and only as to the law of the case. An original and one copy of each instruction asked by any party shall be tendered to the court. The copies shall be numbered and shall indicate who tendered them. Copies of instructions given on the court's own motion or modified by the court shall be so identified. When instructions are asked which the court cannot give, he shall on the margin of the original and copy write the word "refused", and he shall write the word "given" on the margin of the original and copy of those he gives. He shall in no case, after instructions are given, clarify, modify or in any manner explain them to the jury, otherwise than in writing, unless the parties agree otherwise.

(2) The original written instructions given by the court to the jury shall be taken by the jury to the jury room, and shall be returned by them with their verdict into court. The originals and copies of all instructions, whether given, modified or refused, shall be filed as a part of the proceedings in the cause, but on appeal only the copies need be incorporated in the record on appeal.

(3) At the close of the evidence or at any earlier time during the trial that the court reasonably directs, any party may tender instructions and shall at the same time deliver copies thereof to counsel for other parties. If the number or length of the instructions tendered is unreasonable, the court after examining the instructions may require counsel to reduce the number or length thereof. The court shall hold a conference with counsel to settle the instructions and shall inform counsel of his proposed action thereon prior to the arguments to the jury. If as a result of the arguments to the jury the court determines that additional instructions are desirable, he may after a further conference with counsel approve additional instructions. The court shall instruct the jury after the arguments are completed. No party may raise on appeal the failure to give an instruction unless he shall have tendered it. Conferences on instructions must be out of the presence of the jury.

(4) Papers read or received in evidence, other than depositions, may be carried from the bar by the jury. 1933, June 23, Laws 1933, p. 784, art. 7, § 67; 1935, July 5, Laws 1935, p. 1071, § 1; 1937, July 6, Laws 1937, p. 989, § 1; 1941, July 21, Laws 1941, vol. 2, p. 464, § 1; 1955, July 19, Laws 1955, p. 22, § 1, H. No. 439, § 1.

March 25, 1969

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA LAW
REVISION COMMISSION

TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATION

relating to

TAKING INSTRUCTIONS INTO THE JURY ROOM IN CIVIL CASES

CALIFORNIA LAW REVISION COMMISSION
School of Law
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305

WARNING: This tentative recommendation is being distributed so that interested persons will be advised of the Commission's tentative conclusions and can make their views known to the Commission. Any comments sent to the Commission will be considered when the Commission determines what recommendation it will make to the California Legislature.

The Commission often substantially revises tentative recommendations as a result of the comments it receives. Hence, this tentative recommendation is not necessarily the recommendation the Commission will submit to the Legislature.

NOTE: COMMENTS OF INTERESTED PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE IN THE HANDS OF THE COMMISSION NOT LATER THAN JUNE 2, 1969, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY BE CONSIDERED BEFORE THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION ON THIS SUBJECT IS SENT TO THE PRINTER.

NOTE

This recommendation includes an explanatory Comment to each section of the recommended legislation. The Comments are written as if the legislation were enacted since their primary purpose is to explain the law as it would exist (if enacted) to those who will have occasion to use it after it is in effect.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The California Law Revision Commission was authorized by Resolution Chapter 207 of the Statutes of 1955 to make a study to determine whether the jury should be authorized to take a written copy of the court's instructions into the jury room in civil as well as criminal cases.

The Commission published a recommendation and study on this subject in November 1956. See Recommendation and Study Relating to Taking Instructions to the Jury Room, 1 Cal. L. Revision Comm'n Reports at C-1 (1957). A bill was introduced at the 1957 session of the Legislature to effectuate that recommendation. However, the Commission determined not to seek enactment of the bill because it concluded that further study was needed of the procedural problems involved in making a copy of the court's instructions available to the jury in the jury room. This recommendation takes into account the problems that caused the Commission to withdraw its previous recommendation.

March 25, 1969

TENTATIVE

RECOMMENDATION OF THE CALIFORNIA

LAW REVISION COMMISSION

relating to

TAKING INSTRUCTIONS INTO THE JURY ROOM IN CIVIL CASES

Section 1137 of the Penal Code authorizes the jury in a criminal trial to take a copy of the jury instructions to the jury room. There is no similar provision for civil trials and it is uncertain whether a copy of the instructions may be taken to the jury room in a civil trial.¹ Apparently, because of this uncertainty, it is not the practice to make a copy of the instructions available to the jury during its deliberations in a civil case.²

¹ See Cunningham, Should Instructions Go Into the Jury Room?, 33 Cal. S.B.J. 278 (1957); 2 Witkin, California Procedure Trials § 73 (1954).

In several civil cases it has been contended that the trial court may not give the jury a copy of the instructions because there is no statute authorizing it to do so. *Day v. General Petroleum Corp.*, 32 Cal. App.2d 220, 89 P.2d 718 (1939); *Melikian v. Independent Paper Stock Co.*, 8 Cal. App.2d 166, 47 P.2d 539 (1935); *Fererira v. Silvey*, 38 Cal. App. 346, 176 Pac. 371 (1918). Cf. *Granone v. Los Angeles County*, 231 Cal. App.2d 629, 42 Cal. Rptr. 34 (1965); *Shelton v. Burke*, 167 Cal. App.2d 507, 334 P.2d 616 (1959). In each of these cases the appellate court held that if the trial court did err in sending a copy of the instructions into the jury room, the error was not prejudicial in the particular circumstances involved. Dicta in one case indicates that the practice of providing the jury with a copy of the instructions is permissible if the parties expressly consent. *Fererira v. Silvey*, supra.

² Holbrook, A Survey of Metropolitan Trial Courts Los Angeles Area 304 (1956).

The function of instructions is to guide the jury's deliberations. In most cases the instructions are lengthy and complex, particularly when considered from the point of view of a lay jury composed of persons unfamiliar with either law or legal language.³ It is doubtful that the jury, having heard the instructions once as given orally by the court, can remember them in detail after retiring to the jury room. The availability of a copy of the instructions in the jury room would permit the jury to refer to the instructions for a written statement of the issues in the case and the applicable law if it wishes to do so. In most states, the court is authorized or required to provide the jury with a copy of the instructions.⁴

³ A survey of the subjective opinions of over one thousand jurors found that nearly one-half of the jurors said that there was disagreement among the members of the jury as to the meaning of the instructions. Holbrook, A Survey of Metropolitan Trial Courts Los Angeles Area 304 (1956).

⁴ See Appendix to this recommendation. See also 5 Busch, Law and Tactics in Jury Trials § 723, p. 711 (1963).

For these reasons, the Commission recommends that the court be permitted to send a copy of the instructions into the jury room in a civil trial and be required to do so upon request of any party. The procedure for providing the jury with a copy of the instructions should be established by rules adopted by the Judicial Council.⁵ This would permit revision of the procedure from time to time as experience under the rules demonstrates a need for revision and would facilitate the development of alternative procedures if the situation in particular counties requires a different procedure in those counties.

Enactment of the legislation recommended by the Commission would reflect a legislative decision that the taking of instructions into the jury room in civil cases is a desirable practice.⁶ Nevertheless, because the drafting of satisfactory rules may require the solving of unanticipated

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The procedure for presenting proposed instructions to the court and for giving instructions to the jury is outlined in Sections 607a, 608, and 609 of the Code of Civil Procedure. The form of proposed jury instructions is governed by the California Rules of Court. See Superior Court Rule 229; Municipal Court Rule 517.

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Revision of the law relating to the taking of jury instructions into the jury room is not a new idea. As early as 1901, the California Legislature amended Section 612 of the Code of Civil Procedure to provide that the jury must take all instructions with them into the jury room. Cal. Stats. 1901, Ch. 102, § 111, p. 145. The bill containing the amendment was declared unconstitutional for technical reasons. *Lewis v. Dunne*, 134 Cal. 291, 66 Pac. 478 (1901). In 1956 the California Law Revision Commission recommended that the law be revised to permit the instructions to be taken to the jury room. See Recommendation and Study Relating to Taking Instructions to the Jury Room, 1 Cal. L. Revision Comm'n Reports at C-1 (1957). The bill introduced to effectuate this recommendation was withdrawn in order to permit further study of the procedural problem of providing the jury with a clean copy of the instructions.

procedural problems, the statutory provision for furnishing the jury with a copy of the instructions should not become operative until the rules become effective.

The Commission's recommendation would be effectuated by the enactment of the following measure:

An act to add Section 612.5 to the Code of Civil Procedure, relating to jury instructions.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

Code of Civil Procedure Section 612.5 (added)

Section 1. Section 612.5 is added to the Code of Civil Procedure, to read:

612.5. (a) At the discretion of the court or upon request of any party, a copy of the court's instructions to the jury in a civil action or proceeding shall be made available to the jury during its deliberations. In furnishing the jury with a copy of the instructions, the court shall follow the procedure established by rules adopted by the Judicial Council.

(b) The Judicial Council shall adopt rules governing the procedure to be followed under this section. Subdivision (a) does not become operative until such rules become effective.

Comment. Although it will not be clear whether a copy of the court's instructions may be taken into the jury room in a civil trial until subdivision (a) of Section 612.5 becomes operative, such practice normally would not result in prejudicial error. See Shelton v. Burke, 167 Cal. App.2d 507, 334 P.2d 616 (1959); Recommendation of the California Law Revision Commission Relating to Taking Instructions Into the Jury Room in Civil Cases, n. 1, supra, cf. Penal Code § 1137.

TABULAR SUMMARY OF LAW

TAKING INSTRUCTIONS TO THE JURY ROOM

STATE	Civil			Criminal			AUTHORITY
	(1) Pro- hibi- ted	(2) Re- quired	(3) Per- mit- ted	(4) Pro- hibi- ted	(5) Re- quired	(6) Per- mit- ted	
Ala.		X			X		Ala. Code tit 7, § 273 (civil & criminal); Hart v. State, 21 Ala. App. 621
Alas.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ariz.			X			X	Valley Nat'l Bank v. Witter, 58 Ariz. 491 (civil); Rule Crim. Proc. 280 (if any are taken all must be taken)
Ark.		X				X	Ark. Stat. Ann. § 27-1732 (civil); Ark. Stat. Ann. § 43-2138 (criminal)
Calif.	-	-	-			X	Cal. Penal Code § 1137
Colo.		X			X		Rule Civ. Proc. 51; Rule Crim. Proc. 30
Conn.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Dela	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Fla.	-	-	-			X	Rule Crim. Proc. 1.400
Ga.			X	-	-	-	Chattahoochee Brick Co. v. Sullivan, 86 Ga. 50
Ha.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Idaho		X				X	Idaho Code Ann. § 10-206 (civil); Idaho Code Ann. § 19-2203 (criminal)
Ill.		X				X	Ill. Stat. Ann. Ch. 110, § 67 (civil); Ill. Stat. Ann. Ch. 110A, § 451 (criminal)
Ind.	X				X		Smith v. McMillen, 19 Ind. 391; Jones v. Austin, 26 Ind. App. 399, 405-08 (civil); Hall v. State, 8 Ind. 439 (criminal). <u>But see</u> 33 Ind. L. J. 96 (1957).
Iowa			X			X	Rule Civ. Proc. 198, Iowa Code § 784.1 (criminal)
Kan.			X			X	Clark v. Brady, 126 Kan. 59 (civil); State v. Bennington, 44 Kan. 583

STATE	Civil			Criminal			AUTHORITY
	(1) Prohibited	(2) Requested	(3) Permitted	(4) Prohibited	(5) Requested	(6) Permitted	
Ky.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
La.	-	-	-	-	-	X	State v. Strachner, 190 La. 457 (criminal)
Me.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Md.	-	-	X	-	-	X	Rule Civ. Proc. 558, Rule Crim. Proc. 757
Mass.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Mich.	-	-	X	-	-	-	Behrendt v. Wilcox, 277 Mich. 232 (requested by jury)
Minn.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Miss.	-	-	X	-	-	X	Miss. Code Ann. § 1530 (both)
Mo.	-	X	-	-	-	X	Mo. Rev. Stat. § 510.300; Rule Civ. Proc. 70.01 (civil); State v. Colson, 325 Mo. 510 (criminal)
Mont.	-	-	X	-	-	-	Hammond v. Foster, 4 Mont. 421, 433 (if any are given all must be given)
Neb.	-	-	-	-	X	-	Langworthy v. Connelly, 14 Neb. 340 (by implication); Neb. Rev. Stat. § 29-2016
Nev.	-	-	X	-	-	X	Rule Civ. Proc. 51; Nev. Comp. Laws § 175.441 (criminal)
N.H.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
N.J.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
N.M.	-	X	-	-	X	-	N.M. Stat. Ann. §§ 21-8-23 (civil), 41-11-12 (criminal) (upon request of either party); Rule Civ. Proc. 51a
N.Y.	-	-	-	-	-	X	People v. Monat, 200 N.Y. 308 (semble: part of charge given to jury at its request and without objection by parties)
N.C.	-	X	-	-	X	-	N.C. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 1-182 (if instructions are in writing and if requested by either party)(both)
N.D.	-	X	-	-	-	X	N.D. Rev. Code 29-2204; Rule Civ. Proc. 51a (civil); N.D. Rev. Code § 29-2131(if in writing)(criminal)
Ohio	-	X	-	-	X	-	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §§ 2315.01 (civil); 2945.10 (criminal)

STATE	Civil			Criminal			AUTHORITY
	(1) Prohibited	(2) Required	(3) Permitted	(4) Prohibited	(5) Required	(6) Permitted	
Okla.			X			X	Lowenstein v. Holmes, 40 Okla 33, 37 (civil); Okla. Stat. tit. 22, § 893 (criminal)
Ore.		X			X		Ore. Rev. Stat. §§ 17.255 (civil), 136.330 (criminal)
Pa.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
R.I.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
S.C.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
S.D.		X				X	S.D. Code §§ 33.1317 (civil), 34.3654 (criminal)
Tenn.	-	-	-		X		Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-2516 (felonies)
Tex.			X			X	Rule Civ. Proc. 36.18; Rule Crim. Proc. 671
Utah			X			X	Rule Civ. Proc. 47(m); Utah Code Ann. § 77-32-2 (criminal)
Vt.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Va.	-	-	-			X	Bowles v. Commonwealth, 103 Va. 816 (dictum)
Wash.		X				X	Rule Civ. Proc. 51; State v. Hart, 175 P.2d 944 (criminal)
W. Va.			X			X	Rule Civ. Proc. 51 (consent of all parties); State v. Stover, 64 W. Va. 668, 671 (dictum)(criminal)
Wisc.			X			X	Wood v. Aldrich, 25 Wisc. 695 (civil); Loew v. State 60 Wisc. 559 (dictum)(criminal)
Wyo.	-	-	-		X		Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 7-228
TOTALS	1	13	14	1	10	22	