

# Management Report Cites Problems in Virginia's Laboratories

By DAVID LOWERY

Virginia's state laboratories, which have analyzed everything from dreaded diseases to fine whiskeys, suffer from tight-fisted control, poor communications and a backlog of work for police agencies, according to a recently released management report.

The report said strong central control of the State Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services has fostered poor management, poor planning and poor relations with the agencies that use the laboratory services.

However, the chairman of the operating board that oversees the laboratory division, S. Mason Carbaugh, said the criticism is only a sign of the growing pains that came with

State Division of Management Analysis and Systems Development, which compiled the report. "He has spent too much time managing the dollar and not enough tending to other duties."

The report said the director's near-complete control of the division has resulted in inadequate planning that has diminished lab flexibility, limited even minor decisions to the director's office, hindered internal communication and created poor relations with other agencies.

## TREND NOTED

"A trend toward poor relations has been noted by user agencies," the report said. "The major contributing factors to this trend appear to be

the consolidation of so many different laboratory functions in a short time.

The center of the criticism is Dr. A.W. Tiedemann Jr., who has been director of the state's forensic, microbiology, environmental and product-testing labs since they were consolidated in 1972.

While the report applauds Dr. Tiedemann for squeezing the most from the division budget and for quickly bringing together the disparate lab functions, it recommends he delegate more authority to the deputy directors in charge of the individual laboratory bureaus.

"Dr. Tiedemann probably tried to do too much with too little," commented Eldridge W. Brock, analyst with the

reduced communications at upper management levels."

The report suggested that Dr. Tiedemann should become less involved with the routine administration of the laboratories and concentrate on long-range planning, policy and coordination with other agencies.

Dr. Tiedemann said his method of managing the division is a matter of judgment.

"It has to be tailored to individual circumstances," he said of his management technique. "I regard these (judgments) as always open to question, to be answered as times change."

Division employees and management analysts who studied the labs said Dr. Tiedemann is a strong director

who seldom elicits advice from other employees and who objects to questioning or criticism.

## PROBLEM EYED

"One of the big problems in management," Dr. Tiedemann said in his defense, "is that the manager makes decisions. And when you make decisions, sometimes you say 'no.' It's the nature of a service organization. You can't make everybody happy 100 percent of the time."

All seven members of the division's operating board said they agree with the study recommendation that the director delegate more tasks and decisions, and six of them said they "strongly agree" with that recommendation.

The management report also

expressed concern over the operation of the forensic laboratory, particularly delays in processing evidence. The forensic bureau analyzes drugs, matches bullets and tests many other items for the state's police and criminal justice agencies.

## CRITICAL OF DELAYS

Dr. Tiedemann said some commonwealth's attorneys have been critical of the delays. But, he added, the laboratory has no control over the amount of evidence analyzed each day and it needs more employees to process items from 50,000 criminal cases a year.

Forensic Bureau Director Warren Johnson said his bureau differs from the other labs that test air and water purity, agricultural products and even the quality of whiskey in state liquor stores. And Johnson has recommended a change in personnel classifica-

tion for forensic scientists. The report also recommended a pay differential for the forensic lab in Fairfax and a program to advance scientists into management positions. Many employees now feel their jobs are "dead end," the report said.

## DIFFERENTIAL URGED

The division should follow the example of other state agencies and provide a salary differential for employes in Northern Virginia, according to the study. Northern Virginia, it noted, has one of the highest costs of living in the country and the employee turnover in the regional lab there is extraordinary.

"From April through July,

1977, seven of the 21 staff members resigned," the report said.

Johnson has long recommended a pay increase for the Fairfax lab, but he said it probably will do little to halt the turnover. Few employes leave the lab in Fairfax for financial reasons, he said.

Many criminal justice officials feel forensics should be divorced from the other laboratory functions in the division. And there is a bill in the General Assembly that would sever forensics and place it under the secretary of public safety, who sits over the state's other criminal justice agencies.

The report also recommended reinstatement of the Forensic Bulletin, a periodical for law enforcement agencies which was concerned with new developments and processes in the forensic lab.

"The information officer who published the bulletin was transferred to the director's office a year ago and the bulletin has not been published since.

Some criminal justice officials say the demise of the bulletin is an example of Dr. Tiedemann's control becoming counterproductive for both the laboratory and its users.

Dr. Tiedemann said the bulletin writer was transferred to his office (and later quit) because there wasn't enough for him to do in forensics. The bulletin, however, will be published again with the help of other state information officers.

Carbaugh and other board members said many of the recommendations in the report already have been implemented — such as publication of the Forensic Bulletin.

Other suggested changes should be forthcoming, too, he said, including possible changes in the line of authority within the division.

## Suit to Allege Punishment

A former state crime laboratory serologist is expected to file a federal lawsuit today charging that four lab officials conspired to punish her for filing an earlier suit. The first, filed in October, alleged that she was denied a pay increase because she voiced concerns about "serious discrepancies" in lab procedures.

The new suit is expected to make claims similar to those in the earlier suit, which was dismissed when Regina K. Demas failed to file an answer to a motion by defendants. That action apparently was a maneuver to allow inclusion in the new suit of the allegation that four lab officials conspired to punish her.

Miss Demas, 25, claims that she learned of discrepancies in tests performed by Mary Jane Burton, her former boss, last May. Miss Demas took her concerns to officials and asked for corrective action, the earlier suit said.

However, no action was taken and steps were taken to conceal the discrepancies, the earlier suit said.

### No Moves to Halt

The suit also contended that "nothing was done to preclude their recurrence."

Mrs. Burton, chief serologist; Robert E. Edwards, assistant director of the foren-

sic science bureau; Warren G. Johnson, deputy director of the forensic science bureau; and Dr. A.W. Tiedemann Jr., director of consolidated laboratory services, are expected to be named as defendants. In the earlier suit all but Edwards were named as defendants.

Miss Demas is now working in the product testing bureau which performs work for the state Alcoholic Beverage Control Department. The new suit is expected to claim that she was transferred because of the earlier suit. She began work in February 1976 as a serologist.

If Miss Demas' claims are

proved true, it would raise the chance that new criminal trials would result for dozens of and possibly many more, persons who have been convicted.

Serologists conduct scientific tests on blood and other bodily secretions submitted by police in criminal investigations. The results of those tests often are critical in establishing guilt or innocence.

The new suit is expected to ask the U.S. District Court to award Miss Demas the pay increase, declare that her constitutional rights were violated and award her \$300,000 in damages.

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## Second Harassment Suit Is Cut Back by Merhige

A serologist in the state's Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services, who had one suit against her superiors dismissed earlier this year after her lawyer failed to comply with court rules, had most of the claims in a second suit dismissed yesterday in U.S. District Court here.

U.S. District Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. dismissed most of Regina K. Demas' claims that she has been harassed by her superiors because she raised questions about the validity of tests performed by one of them, Mrs. Mary Jane Burton.

The judge said that Ms. Demas and her lawyer, George William Warren IV, may pursue claims against Mrs. Burton and other lab officials only for actions taken against her since January, when the original suit was dismissed.

The judge said his action was required by the legal doctrine of *res judicata*, which bars a second round of litigation on any question already decided.

Merhige said all of the allegations of harassment and actions against Mrs. Demas which occurred before dismissal of the first suit could have been subjects of that suit has now been dismissed, Ms. Demas may not renew those charges, Merhige said.

The judge gave Warren and

Ms. Demas permission to proceed with their claims that Ms. Demas was subjected to harassment by her superiors merely because she filed the initial lawsuit.

Ms. Demas has charged that in May of 1977 she became aware of "discrepancies" in tests performed by Mrs. Burton. She took the problem up with Mrs. Burton and her superiors, Ms. Demas said, but

rather than trying to rectify the situation they took steps to cover it up.

Ms. Demas' first suit was dismissed after Warren failed to respond to interrogatories submitted by lawyers for the state. Federal court rules require that interrogatories be answered in writing and Warren's failure to provide any answer spurred the first dismissal.

## Charles City Plans To Advertise Post

*Times-Dispatch State Staff*

CHARLES CITY — The Charles City County Board of Supervisors will begin the search for a new county administrator soon.

Administrator C. Dean BeLer has notified the board he will be resigning effective Aug. 1 to accept the post of county administrator in Greenville County.

The board plans to begin advertising soon for a replacement, BeLer said yesterday.

The 32-year former Newport News city employee has served as the county's administrator only 11 months, and he acknowledged that was a relatively short tenure for a county administrator.

"I hate to leave the county," he said, but Greenville offered him \$20,000 a year, nearly a third more than he has been making in Charles City.

The Charles City supervisors understood his position when he informed them of his decision to move, BeLer said. "They were happy that I have a chance to move up," he explained.

BeLer acknowledged that the county may have to increase the administrator's salary if it is going to hold on to an experienced administrator.

Some other rural counties do pay about the same as Charles City, he explained. But most rural counties which happen to border on major metropolitan areas, as does Charles City, pay more.