

Wednesday, August 28, 1991

LAPD recruitment of gays is imminent

Change in policy will be a part of lawsuit settlement

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LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Police Department will begin openly recruiting gays as part of a pending settlement of a lawsuit filed by a former officer, city officials said yesterday.

City Council members and police commissioners said they instructed their attorneys to try immediately to settle the \$5 million suit filed by Mitchell Grobeson, who quit the LAPD in 1988 after alleging he was harassed by fellow officers because he is gay.

Grobeson, now a San Francisco police officer, has insisted that any settlement include an LAPD pledge

to recruit gays and lesbians actively, something that embattled Police Chief Daryl Gates has steadfastly refused to do.

Gay activists say the 8,400-officer LAPD is the largest police agency in the nation that does not recruit gay officers. The practice has been routine for years in New York and San Francisco and began recently on a more limited scale in San Diego.

The issue is particularly sensitive in Los Angeles because the LAPD often has been accused of mistreating the city's large gay community. Complaints of officers physically and verbally abusing gays were aired most recently in hearings before the Christopher Commission, which investigated brutality within the department.

In its long list of recommended reforms, the commission called on the beleaguered police department to fully implement policies advanc-

ing the recruitment and promotion of gays and lesbians.

"This will be a milestone in gay and lesbian history," David Smith, spokesman for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, declared after yesterday's development. "The Los Angeles Police Department is several years behind the times. We're hopeful that a new era is beginning."

Emerging from a closed-door meeting with police commissioners, three members of the City Council's budget committee refused to divulge details of the proposed settlement with Grobeson, who could not be reached for comment. However, the council members made it clear that a change in the LAPD's policy on gay recruitment is imminent.

"The key issue here is that this city will remove the barriers to full participation by qualified gay and lesbian people because it is the right thing to do," said Councilman Joel Wachs, a leading gay-rights proponent. "This police department has to reflect the broad cultural diversity that exists in our city."