

# Courthouse Facilities Scored as 'Mediocre'

By JOSEPH M. HARVEY

Courthouse and courtroom facilities in Massachusetts are "mediocre to use the most charitable term," the executive secretary to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court declared yesterday in his annual report.

Especially criticized by executive secretary John A. Daly was the Gloucester District Court which he described as "miserable" and "wretched," and the East Cambridge courts.

The 61-page report, including a number of statistical tables, showed the cost of operating courts in the state increased by about \$1 million to a total of \$16,880,157.

The report included a proposal for using retired judges to help out in emergencies, and a proposal to eliminate special judges in the district courts and replace them with 22 full time associate judges available to sit wherever they might be needed.

The report also pointed out that the failure of the Legislature to provide funds for use of district court judges forced the superior court to make the

"painful choice" of withdrawing judges from civil sessions and concentrating them in the criminal sessions.

Discussing courtroom and courthouse facilities, Daly said "some progress" has been made. He praised the new combined courthouse and police station at Leominster and improvements made or scheduled for courthouses at Stoughton, Plymouth, Brockton, Taunton, and Holyoke.

On the average, the report said, the state's court facilities "range from very fine to very poor." Referring to three court buildings at East Cambridge, the report said there isn't sufficient room to handle trials.

Daly said proposals have been made to either remodel or rebuild the East Cambridge site or move all the courts to a place nearer the geographical center of Middlesex County.

Among other recommendations in the report were:

**Court Procedures:** Cut down the paper work and eliminate old-style procedures by adopting some of the Federal Court rules.

**Probate Court:** Probate judges should be made available to help out when needed in superior court trials. Guardians ad litem as appointees of individual judges should be eliminated and "a salaried public officer could be used instead."

**District Courts:** Use of special, parttime judges as a "basic weakness." These courts should not rely so extensively "on parttime judges who are expected to make their living as private practitioners."

Recommended appointment of 22 full time associate judges to be distributed as follows: Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire counties, 3; Essex county, 3; Worcester county, 3; Middlesex county, 5; Suffolk county, 4; Norfolk county, 2; Plymouth, Bristol, Barnstable, Nantucket and Dukes counties, 2.

**Lawyers:** "The key to the successful administration of justice is the existence of a well educated bar adequate in numbers . . . We have for some time been confronted with the unpleasant fact that in a number of our counties competent trial lawyers are in short supply."