

Orange County Perspective

A Positive Development Bears Watching

■ Officer Training Film on Working With Gays Is an Example of Good Police Work

The Orange County Human Relations Commission usually can be counted on to do good work in bringing together different groups in the county and exposing them to each other's viewpoints. Its latest example of a job well done is the videotape it produced to help train police officers in how to work with lesbians and gays.

The genesis of the video was unfortunate. The editor of the official newsletter of the county deputy sheriffs' union wrote an editorial that included derogatory remarks about gays. The editor, a deputy sheriff, recalled his time on a sex crimes unit, when he "would arrest homosexuals for molesting little boys. . . ."

The editorial prompted outrage among gay-rights groups and their supporters, who said there was no evidence that homosexuals are more prone to be child molesters than are

heterosexuals.

The editorial and subsequent furor also spurred the commission to produce the 16-minute film. It was unveiled this month at the county sheriff's headquarters, and those attending included the undersheriff and the county district attorney. The location and the attendees sent a good symbol that the county's law enforcement professionals were committed to treating all groups with respect. That is especially important in view of a number of vicious attacks in Orange County in recent years upon men whom the assailants thought were gay, and who were attacked simply for that reason.

In the film, Placentia Police Chief Manuel Ortega, who is a human relations commissioner, correctly



Newport Beach officers are briefed before shift.

notes that officers need to learn about gay and lesbian issues because they serve all the people. Police officials from other departments warn their troops against using derogatory terms for homosexuals off duty or on.

Police chiefs in the county have pledged to use the video in training sessions and to show it occasionally during routine roll calls. That's a good use of a good training tool.