

Inquest Ignored by Panthers

By William Chapman

Reuters

CHICAGO, Jan. 7—A special inquest in the slaying of two Black Panther leaders bogged down today as the Panther party members who survived a Dec. 4 police raid boycotted the hearing.

Their absence left the field to police witnesses, indicating that the first of three investigations of the slaying may not produce much new evidence.

The special coroner's jury is investigating the shooting by police of Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in a West Side apartment last month.

Police from the state's attorney's office contend they were not at first in the pre-dawn raid. The Panthers claim the police burst in firing, killing Hampton, the Illinois chairman, while he was in bed.

The seven other Panthers who were in the apartment and survived the shooting

were subpoenaed to testify this week. Three showed up yesterday but, on the advice of lawyers refused to answer questions. None of the others showed up today.

All seven have been charged with attempted murder and their lawyers believe that testimony now might jeopardize their trial later.

Their refusal to appear, however, brought an angry denunciation today from Martin S. Gerber, the special deputy coroner appointed to conduct the unusual inquiry.

"If they feel as badly about their comrades as they say they do, they should tell their story to the world," Gerber declared as the session opened.

Meanwhile, a new mystery developed last night when two Chicago newspapers reported that an unofficial autopsy had disclosed a heavy dose of Seconal, a sleep inducing drug, in Hampton's blood stream.

The autopsy was conducted shortly after the shooting by a former chief pathologist for the coroner's office who was retained by Panther lawyers.

Three Times Needed Dose

The pathologist, Dr. Vincent Levine, reportedly said the dosage was about three times the amount needed to induce sleep in a man Hampton's size.

There was no explanation of the drug, but Black Panther leader Bobby Rush claimed it proved Hampton could not have gotten out of his bed to

fire at police the morning of the raid. He contended that some "pig agent" must have given the drug to Hampton.

The inquest is being held amid maximum security precautions in a courtroom of the Cook County Criminal Court's building. Spectators, lawyers and reporters are searched thoroughly by police before entering.

After a lunch recess, Panther attorneys asked that Hampton's mother, Iberia, be excused from a search by policewomen at the door.

Gerber said he did not blame Mrs. Hampton for considering the search to be an indignity, but insisted the panel was concerned that someone might smuggle in weapons.

Possible Intimidation

Mrs. Hampton, he said, might be "intimidated into carrying a weapon on her person against her will . . . I'm awfully sorry that it has to be done."

Gerber is a Chicago attorney selected by the regular coroner to conduct the inquest. The six jurors, three black and three white, are prominent Chicago professional men. The inquest was ordered after widespread version aroused public pressure for an investigation last month.

A federal grand jury also is investigating the shooting and a private citizens' panel that includes former United Na-

tions ambassador Arthur Goldberg is looking into this and other Panther-police clashes.

In a day marked primarily by procedural arguments between Gerber and lawyers for the Hampton family the six jurors indicated they expect to play a strong role in the hearing.

One juror, Philip Corboy, a prominent trial lawyer, closely questioned the first witness, Deputy Police Chief Merlin Nygren. Nygren, who had arrived at the Hampton apartment several minutes after the shooting on Dec. 4, gave a synopsis of the official police version.

Corboy wanted to know what happened to the shotgun slug the police said was fired through a door at them by a woman inside the apartment. Nygren said he assumed the slug had sailed out the front door and never was recovered.

"How did the police know a woman had fired the shot if the door was closed at the time, Corboy asked him. Nygren said he was not sure how they knew but that police who burst in saw the woman trying to reload a shotgun. All of his information came from a sergeant who led the raid, Nygren acknowledged.

Nygren said that during a "cursory" inspection of the apartment he saw pinned to a bulletin board news clippings of another Chicago shooting in which Panthers allegedly had killed two policemen.