

BLACK PANTHER BOYCOTT IS HIT

Chicago Inquest Official
Decries Lack of Aid

By DEBORAH RANKIN

CHICAGO (AP) — A specially appointed deputy coroner decried Wednesday the refusal of Black Panther party members to cooperate in an inquest into the shooting deaths of two of their leaders during a police raid.

Martin S. Gerber, a lawyer appointed by Coroner Andrew J. Toman to conduct the inquest, noted that party members have charged their leaders were murdered but are refusing to cooperate in his inquiry.

Four of the seven Panthers who survived the raid Dec. 4 on a West Side apartment were absent from the proceedings.

All seven have been charged with attempted murder and other crimes.

LEADERS SLAIN

Fred Hampton, 21, leader of the Illinois Black Panther party, and Mark Clark, 22, a Peoria party leader, were slain in the predawn raid by 14 policemen, 9 white and 5 black.

Gerber said accusations have been made that police killed Hampton as he slept.

The Panthers' have spoken of murder," he said, and added:

"I have offered to allow them to tell what they saw police do without having to tell anything about what they themselves did. I am deeply disappointed they have sought to boycott the inquest."

The refusal to cooperate, he said, is hampering his efforts to arrive at the "full truth of the case."

DISENCHANTMENT CITED

He said, "I am quite disenchanted with the idea of one of the attorneys rushing out of here with his client, refusing

the coroner the right to ask questions, and then rushing down before TV cameras to make a great speech concerning his client's constitutional rights."

Three Panthers took the witness stand Tuesday and gave their names but refused to answer any other questions on the advice of counsel on grounds of possible self-incrimination.

Entered in competition are Gerber said he offered the occupants of the apartment "carte blanche opportunity" to detail their versions of the incident.

Gerber said he would request the Cook County Chicago sheriff to "use every proper means" to compel attendance by the four Panthers absent Wednesday.

Lawyers representing two of the four said they have not been served with subpoenas.

One of the four, Deborah Johnson, gave birth to a son Dec. 29 and her attorney said she is absent for medical reasons. Another, Blair Anderson, has been in a hospital since Dec. 4 with wounds suffered in the raid.

MICHIGAN OR GEORGIA

The other two are Brenda Harris of Chicago and Verline Brewer, reportedly either in Michigan or Georgia.

Attendance at Wednesday's hearing was sparse, compared with the crowd which appeared for the first day, Tuesday, and filled the hearing room.

Police—members of the Chicago Police Department assigned to the state's attorney's office — said they had a warrant to search the apartment for illegal weapons and that they were met with gunfire when they sought to enter. Lawyers for the Panthers have charged that the police fired first.

Police said they retrieved 18 illegal weapons from the apartment.

OBJECTION OVERRULED

Gerber overruled state's attorney's objections to specific questions put by Panther lawyers Wednesday to Merlin J. Nygren, deputy assistant superintendent of police.

Attorneys for the Panthers maintained that close questioning regarding the chronology of the raid was necessary to establish whether the 14 policemen who participated in the raid gave consistent accounts of the

incident.

Dennis Cunningham, one of the attorneys, asked Nygren if he knew whether any of the inhabitants of the apartment were members of the Black Panther party.

Nygren replied, "No," but added that newspaper clippings on a recent shootout between Panthers and police in which two policemen were killed were affixed to a wall in the apartment.

"I also noticed a manual on the correct use of the shotgun," he said.