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Panther Hearing Off Until Tomorrow

By EDITH EVANS ASHBURY

Pretrial hearings for 13 Black Panthers accused of plotting to bomb public places were adjourned yesterday to tomorrow because of a fire over the weekend in the building in which three defense lawyers have offices.

Supreme Court Justice John W. Murtagh and Assistant District Attorney Joseph A. Phillips expressed "sympathy" to the lawyers for their fire damage.

However, Justice Murtagh said he was "amazed" at the request for a week's adjournment from one of the lawyers, Gerald Lefcourt, because Mr. Lefcourt's "clients are in the main incarcerated."

Mr. Lefcourt said that all the lawyers and defendants wanted the hearings to proceed "as soon as possible." However, he said, he needs time to assess the water and smoke damage

to files and records on his fourth-floor office.

Mr. Lefcourt, his sister-in-law, Mrs. Carol Lefcourt, and William E. Crain, who represent six of the 13 defendants, share an office on the fourth floor of 37 Union Square. A fire that broke out in a restaurant on the first floor of the five-story loft building raged for seven hours Sunday morning, during which time 30 firemen, including two battalion chiefs, were injured.

Mr. Lefcourt and other defense lawyers accepted a proposal yesterday by Mr. Phillips that the order of the hearings be changed so that hearings could resume tomorrow with clients of three lawyers whose offices were not in the burned building.

These lawyers are Sanford Katz, Charles McKinney and Robert J. Bloom. Tomorrow's hearing will be on a motion by Mr. Katz's client Lee Roper for

suppression as evidence material seized at his home when he was arrested April 2, 1969.

Three similar motions brought by other defendants have been completed and 11 more are pending. Three motions opposing the use of statements made by defendants and one seeking suppression of wiretap evidence are also pending.

The hearings, which began Feb. 2, were frequently adjourned because of disorders but proceeded quietly three days last week.