

Brown Trial Kills Business in

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BEL AIR, Md., March 16—Twenty-four women called Winnell Streett's home early today and asked to have their hair done at her suburban beauty parlor rather than her Main Street shop, six doors up from the courthouse. Three others just canceled outright.

The cancellations are unusual for a Monday, Mrs. Streett said, but things have been that way since the trial of H. Rap Brown came here from Cambridge and killed the Easter business on Main Street.

"I had 24 calls," Mrs. Streett said. "I counted them. Finally I told the girl to say I wasn't home. This will kill our Easter sales."

The one customer in the Main Street shop peeked out from under a hair dryer to admit that she had made a mistake. She would not have come to town either had she remembered the trial. Later, when a reporter checked back, he was told the woman took a cab home. That, everyone agreed, was most unusual.

"I imagine that people are worried," said Darnell Branson, who owns a jewelry store across from the courthouse. "They don't want trouble. It's hard on business. People are not going to come to town."

In the mock-castle armory down Main Street from the courthouse the state police have set up a rumor center,

and effort to battle false information with the truth.

"People ask, 'Do we need passes to get into town?'" said Sgt. J. R. Trammell. "They want to know if it's safe to come into town. Is the town open? Has Rap Brown been found?"

There may, after all, be reason for fear. A week ago, two men were killed when a bomb blew their car into scrap the night the court proceedings began. A bombing followed in Cambridge. Then the press came, so many in fact that they easily fill the empty store that CBS has rented across from the courthouse.

And this is all about Rap Brown, a man, who the State of Maryland says, can cause a riot.

All this has not been easy for a town of 7,500 where there are eight policemen and where most of the Negroes live quietly in about two-dozen houses on Alice Anne Street, near the black American Legion hall.

"We're so peaceful and quiet here, said J. Vaughn McMahon, who has been police chief for 23 years. "The crime rate is low. Everybody respects everybody else. We're really 'law-abiding Americans.'"

Both blacks and whites agree that there never has been any racial trouble here. Those interviewed clearly recall that a sit-in was held in Aberdeen over the issue of black studies and it was not surprising

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that about 30 pickets from that school marched briefly around the courthouse today.

"All the colored here are well-liked," said one shopkeeper. "I think they like the whites. I don't think any of the colored here will join with them. There may be a couple, but I doubt it."

A hardware owner confirmed that business was way off. Then he looked out his window at the pickets at the courthouse.

"It's too professional a performance not to be paid," he concluded. "It looks like paid, professional pickets. It looks to me that something is behind it now."

After the trial was again

postponed late today, Cornelius Cronin, president of the Commercial and Savings Bank, crossed the street to talk to Chief McMahon and tell his the delay was terrible. It would move the trial one week closer to Easter, he told the chief, and kill what's left of the Easter business.

And in Cambridge, where the radios were tuned to Bel Air news but the town otherwise quiet, the assistant police chief, James Leonard, commented on the postponement.

"It seems like these people get whatever they want," he said. "If it was you or me it wouldn't be postponed."

"They tell me it was postponed seven days because of racial tension. If you have the trial in a day, a week or a month there's going to be tension."