

6 Saturday, Sunday, May 21-22, 1970

Handahan's lost trust

It is not credible that Handahan knew so little about this raid or so much of it entirely to understand it. He was smart enough to tell his story at the trial, even to a "re-creation" on television—yet the story that emerges is quite different from what he told them.

Even with the most generous interpretation of Handahan's maneuvering, the impression persists that he was dedicated to upholding law and order, instead contributed to a great deal of law and order.

Two of the most responsible organizations in the black community, the NAACP and the Urban League, have now joined in the demands for further action. The Urban League called for a resignation, and warned that "an already critical situation can only deteriorate further" unless there are "rapid moves to rectify it. Such warnings from groups that are working for reform within the system, in contrast to the Panthers' revolutionary hysteria, should be heeded.

There has been no exoneration of the Panthers in this affair. Nor should there be. Their record of violence and the cache of guns found in the raided West Side apartment make it quite plain that a search was justified, and the Panther tactics of hindering justice since then are reprehensible. But none of this erases the onus of a raid that was bungled, resulting in the loss of life, and then was officially whitewashed until the federal grand jury

A more positive response from Handahan might have eased this situation. It didn't come. It is hard, now, to see how he can restore any degree of trust he must have to carry out the responsibilities of the state's attorney. But unless he can find a way to do so, we see no alternative to his stepping aside for a replacement who can command public confidence.