

# Black Panthers Hearing Ends Second Day in Melee

Two Court Attendants,  
Detective Injured

NEW YORK (AP) — A bomb-plot hearing involving 13 Black Panthers was disrupted Tuesday for the second straight day, as a courtroom melee spread into a corridor amid shouting, kicking and fisticuffs. Two court attendants and a detective suffered minor injuries. A defense attorney claimed one of the Panthers was beaten with a blackjack. A former defendant, in court as a spectator, was arrested after police said he kicked the detective in the chest.

As he had on Monday, State Supreme Court Justice John M. Murtagh recessed the pretrial hearing for a cooling-off period, while spectators shook their fists and screamed insults at him.

After the scuffling had subsided and the courtroom was cleared, Murtagh returned to the bench to hear a defense lawyer express concern over the physical safety of the Panther defendants.

Murtagh asked: "Of the defendants? A report has been made to me that two court officers have been injured."

## SEVERAL OUTBURSTS

Several outbursts from defendants marked an afternoon session of the hearing. It got underway after two of the defendants, Richard Moore, 24, a self-employed painter, and Joan Bird, 20, a nursing student, complained they were beaten by court officers during the earlier disorders.

Murtagh, noting injuries to the two court officers and the detective, replied:

"We know what started it. The court professes profound consideration for those maintaining order, and the officers do it at the risk of their personal safety. I also observed how counsels' behavior brought about the disorder."

The hearing is scheduled to resume Wednesday.

## DEFENDANTS SHOUT

The disorder began building up inside the courtroom as the defendants shouted, "Power to the People!" and sympathizers in the audience took up the cry.

"We have been denied our constitutional rights," a defendant told Murtagh at one point. "You know we can't get a fair

trial because you don't like us." Murtagh finally accused defense attorney William Crain of abetting the unruly conduct of the defendants by his manner of questioning. This brought a woman spectator to her feet, shouting: "Who judges your conduct?"

Murtagh ordered the woman removed from the courtroom. Now the defendants rose, proclaiming: "If she goes, we're going too."

Court officers began pushing the defendants out of the courtroom into a corridor leading to detention pens.

## PUSHING MATCH

Newsmen saw one defendant swing at a tall, thick-set Negro officer. Other guards rushed in and a shoving and pushing match ensued.

Amid the uproar in the courtroom, detective John Kiernan, awaiting call as a witness, went to the aid of two court officers. Police arrested Lonnie Epps, who gave his age as 18, after they said he kicked Kiernan in the chest.

Epps, a high school pupil, had been indicted with the 13 Panther defendants. But because of his age he was granted youthful offender status Monday, a procedure that ended his role in the case.

The 13 defendants are under indictment on charges of conspiring to murder policemen and to bomb police stations, railroad facilities and department stores, as well as possession of dangerous weapons. Maximum theoretical penalty on all counts would be 125 years in prison.

The Black Panthers have claimed the indictment is part of a nationwide campaign of harassment being conducted against the militant organization by federal and local authorities. The Department of Justice has denied such a campaign exists.