

Beating Dispute Halts Trial of N.Y. Panthers

NEW YORK, Feb. 3 (UPI)—

Shouting and fist-waving today interrupted the trial of 13 Black Panthers charged with conspiring to bomb police stations and subway facilities.

A defense attorney charged that a court officer beat one of the defendants with a blackjack during the recess called on account of the disturbance.

State Supreme Court Judge John Murtagh granted defense attorney Sanford Katz's request that the allegedly assaulted defendant, Richard Moore, known also as Dharruba, be examined by a doctor and photographed. Katz said he saw a court officer throw Moore to the floor, pull out a blackjack and beat him.

"I think there are some grave, grave questions we have to decide now," Katz told Murtagh. "The defendant Dharruba was beaten with a blackjack. We want him examined by a doctor. We want him photographed now, not two hours from now."

Murtagh quickly called the recess when pandemonium broke out in the courtroom. A young white spectator who identified herself as Mary Ann Weisman began shouting at Murtagh, saying she had "as much right to speak as anyone when I see injustice done."

Other spectators then jumped on chairs and began crowding around court officers shouting, "black people have no right" and "this is worse than Hitler." At least one male spectator was dragged from the courtroom kicking and punching.

Before the outburst there had been legal arguments over the admissibility of two shotguns, an M-14 rifle and an automatic pistol into evidence.

The weapons allegedly were seized at the home of one of the defendants, Michael Tabor, last April 2 when the Panthers were arrested in a series of pre-dawn raids.

A jury has yet to be selected.

A total of 22 Panthers were indicted on charges of conspiring to bomb police stations, subway switches and the Bronx Botanical Garden, but nine of them are either still at large or in jail on other charges in New Jersey. The opening day of the trial on Monday also was marked by disruptions.