

# 'Chicago 8' Jurors Threatened

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CHICAGO, Sept. 30—The jury in the "Chicago 8" conspiracy trial was ordered isolated from the public today after two of its members received what were described as threatening letters.

U.S. District Judge Julius J. Hoffman ordered the jurors sequestered for the remainder of the trial, and a whole new round of charges arose between the defense and prosecution lawyers over the origin of the letters.

The two jurors received letter stating, "We are watching you," and signed only, "The Black Panthers." The Black Panther Party is a militant organization whose chairman, Bobby G. Seale, is one of the defendants on trial here. He and seven others are accused of conspiring to start a riot at the Democratic National Convention last year.

### Called Part of Plot

The defendants promptly charged in a press conference that the letters "were phony" and part of a government plot to eliminate the two jurors and blame the Black Panthers.

Their lawyer, William M. Kunstler, later told the court the defendants believed that "some agents" of the government caused the letters to be sent to the jurors. Asked by Judge Hoffman to prove that charge "right now," Kunstler admitted he had no evidence. But he asked for an impartial investigation—not conducted by the FBI—of the letters.

The two jurors receiving the letters are reported to be Kristi King, a 23-year-old suburban woman who is the youngest member of the panel, and Ruth Petersen, a middle aged housewife.

The defendants, in a joint statement read by Tom Hayden, said they and their lawyers had regarded those two as being impartial and "open-minded." They accused the government lawyers of "tampering with the jury" by trying to eliminate those members seemingly most favorably disposed toward the defendants.

### 'Near Our Age Group'

Hayden said Miss King was

erred seriously in ordering four defense lawyers arrested for trying to withdraw from the case without appearing formally in his court. The four were cited for contempt, but Hoffman yesterday vacated that order.

It would be unlikely for the government to move for a mistrial since the defendants could not then be tried again. However, if Judge Hoffman seized on the jury issue to declare a mistrial the defendants might be tried again. Lawyers differ on that point.

### Question Unanswered

All those questions were left unanswered tonight. After Hoffman ordered the jury to move into hotel rooms for the remainder of the trial, he scheduled a hearing for Wednesday morning on the two jurors who received the letters.

One of them informed Hoffman of the letter this morning and the other informed the U.S. Attorney's office, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Schultz. The letters were in identical handwriting.

The government this morning told Hoffman it wanted to discuss an important matter with him and defense lawyers in chambers. For several hours, no court observers knew what the issue was. The defendants themselves broke the news when, after a brief meeting with their attorneys, they called a press conference to attack the government.

### Called 'Racist Attack'

A statement by Seale, the Panther leader who was in custody of U.S. marshals, was read denouncing the letters as part of a "plot" by the FBI to "tamper with the jury and then try to blame it on the Panthers." He called it a "low-life racist attack."

As the trial began this morning, the defense lawyers tried and lost another bid to

get Judge Hoffman to disqualify himself. This time they charged him with displaying "prejudice" toward one of their legal team and cited as evidence a column written by Nicholas von Hoffman and appearing last Saturday in The Washington Post.

Von Hoffman had written that the judge was overheard on a Federal Building elevator last week telling a companion, "Now we are going to hear this wild man Weinglass." Leonard I. Weinglass of Newark, N.J., is one of the defense lawyers.

Von Hoffman said he had been in the elevator and heard the comment of the judge during a luncheon recess. After court resumed that afternoon, the judge held Weinglass in

contempt of court for ignoring judicial instructions during his opening statement to the jury.

### Subpoenaed by Defense

Von Hoffman was under subpoena by the defense to testify on the comment this morning, but Judge Hoffman denied the motion to disqualify himself without calling witnesses. He said that "papers filed in support (of the motion) do not state grounds for the relief sought."

He told Kunstler he had read all the papers accompanying the motion in his chambers. One of the accompanying papers was a reprint of the von Hoffman column containing the overheard remark.

the only juror "near our age group." He did not say why the defense considered the other juror as being "open-minded" in the case.

All of the jurors' names and addresses were printed in Chicago newspapers last week. The panel consists of two men and ten women, all of them middle-aged except for Miss King.

Hayden also raised the possibility that the government might be looking for a mistrial in the case. If that is true, he said, "It's because they have made so many mistakes so far that they want to start all over again."

The defense believes that if the eight are found guilty in this trial the verdict may be set aside by an appeals court on the grounds of prejudice by Judge Hoffman. They contend he has shown persistent hostility toward them and

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