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## For swift airing of Panther case

An open and meticulously impartial public airing of the circumstances in which two Black Panther Party leaders were killed Dec. 5 must be held without delay. The controversy is dangerously dividing this community, undermining respect for law-enforcement officials and inciting racial emotions.

That is why we heartily endorse the unprecedented entry of the Chicago Bar Assn. into the controversy with a proposal that all the facts be publicly scrutinized by a special blue-ribbon coroner's jury made up of citizens in whom the whole community, black and white, can have implicit confidence.

A number of other investigations are planned or are already under way including one by the U.S. Department of Justice. But a special coroner's jury would have the advantage of being open to the public, it would be a probe of a local situation by local people and it could be inaugurated quickly.

Last Sunday we proposed a full airing of the case and last Thursday we added the suggestion that an investigation should be made by a grand jury, preferably under federal jurisdiction. The evidence being gathered by FBI agents for the Justice Department may eventually be presented to such a jury. But events of the past week—the poles-apart accounts of the police and of the lawyers for the Black Panthers and what appear to be inaccuracies in photographic evidence made public by State's Atty. Edward V. Hanrahan—have intensified emotions and further polarized public opinion; time is now an important factor in restoring community confidence.

This was recognized in the proposal

made to Coroner Andrew J. Toman by Frank Greenberg, president of the bar association. Investigation of deaths by violence is a responsibility of a coroner's jury; it is a proper body to do what is needed in this instance.

In addition to providing a select personnel, Greenberg proposed that Toman name two black attorneys as "friends of the coroner"—similar to the *amicus curiae* in a court case—who could question witnesses and give other legal assistance. The swift acceptance by Toman of the proposal for a blue ribbon jury and appointment of "friends of the coroner," and Toman's intention to subpoena witnesses, are in keeping with the gravity of the situation. We commend Toman for his prompt reaction.

Eventually evidence will be produced under oath in the trial of seven persons arrested by the state's attorney's police in the raid. An immediate public hearing will create pre-trial publicity, which the bar association deprecates, but in this instance publicity should serve not only the cause of

justice but the community need for straight facts fast.

In his efforts to present what he believed to be the facts last week, the state's attorney added inaccuracies, and more heat, not light, to the controversy.

Photographs he turned over to the Chicago Tribune—public property that should have been released in an unhurried fashion to media—turned out to be misleading.

— The Sun-Times, in order to give its readers the information released by Hanrahan to the Tribune, reproduced the pictures in the middle of the night. We accepted Hanrahan's official explanation of their importance as evidence.

We also reprinted the stories of the policemen detailing how they were fired upon by the residents of the apartment during the raid. The persons arrested in the raid deny they fired at the police.

Next morning at the first opportunity our reporters visited the apartment to check the accuracy of the pictures. They discovered that what were identified as bullet holes supposedly made by Black Panther guns in a door frame were actually rusty nail heads. A picture identified as a bathroom door into which Panther guns had been fired turned out to be that of a bedroom door into which police guns had been fired according

to the policemen's own account of their actions. Questions have also arisen about the picture allegedly showing a shot fired from within through a front door.

Because we have raised questions about the accounts given by the police—as others have—we have been accused by some readers of endorsing the Black Panther creed.

As we said last Thursday we totally disagree with the Black Panthers' Mao-Communist philosophy and its commitment to violence. But we also are committed, as all Americans must be, to the philosophy that totalitarian methods must not be employed by law enforcement officials.

In asking a full investigation, neither we nor the bar association are accusing Hanrahan's men of totalitarian tactics. The investigation has become mandatory because too many citizens are skeptical of the story told by the police and the many unanswered questions about the raid. Until their doubts are resolved this community will be on a razor's edge.

So we urge speed in getting to the provable truth. And we repeat: The problems of our modern society and our cities will not be solved by gunfire, either by those who want to change society or by the forces of law and order. Bloodshed only makes the problems worse and delays remedies men of good will want.