

6 of 7 Panthers will boycott public inquest

By Ray Brennan and Thomas J. Dolan

Six of seven Black Panther Party militants will have nothing more to do with a public inquest into the fatal shootings by state's attorney's police of two party leaders, defense attorneys said Tuesday.

The seventh, Verlean Brewer, 17, is in Atlanta and has no plans to return to Chicago, it was reported.

The Panther decision to ignore the inquest came at the end of the first day of public

Independent autopsy shows Fred Hampton's body contained high amount of sleep drug, Page 10.

hearings, marked by shouting, in the Criminal Courts Building.

Three of the seven party members went to the witness stand during the session, but refused to answer questions — or even to listen to any.

All are survivors of a Dec. 4 predawn police raid in which Fred Hampton, 21, Illinois Black Panther Party chairman, and Mark Clark, 22, a party leader from Peoria, were killed in an apartment at 2337 W. Monroe.

May end prospect of full story

The day's developments apparently ended any prospect that the inquest would accomplish its purpose of disclosing the full story by both sides in the seething controversy.

Fourteen policemen, all assigned to State's Atty. Edward V. Hanrahan's office, are expected to begin giving their testimony after the inquest resumes Wednesday in the courts building, at 26th and California.

The Panthers' withdrawal announcement came after Special Deputy Coroner Martin S. Gerber persisted in asking questions of the three Panthers who took the witness stand.

The defense lawyers stated repeatedly that the survivors of the raid, all of them under charges of attempted murder of the policemen, would say nothing under oath, except to state their names and addresses.

To save testimony for trial

The defendant-witnesses will preserve their evidence under their constitutional rights until they go on trial in Criminal Court, the attorneys said. At the day's end, attorney James D. Montgomery said:

"We do not expect to return after leaving here tonight. We are through with the inquest.

"We will refuse any further efforts to make

circus clowns out of our clients by suffering them to undergo questions which they have given advance notice of refusal to answer."

Gerber insisted throughout several stormy intervals that he was doing his best to conduct "a fair and truthful hearing" in the public interest and that he would do nothing to jeopardize the forthcoming criminal trials.

"We will proceed with the inquest," Gerber said after being told of the Panthers' decision to pull out.

"We will gather every bit of evidence we can from every witness who will testify, including the policemen."

Jury to seek verdict

At the end of the inquest a six-member jury will be called upon to return a verdict on the causes of the two deaths, the surrounding circumstances and the criminality involved, if any.

The three Panthers who appeared under subpoena Tuesday are Ronald Satchel, 19, of 6846 S. Clyde; Harold Bell, 23, of Rockford, and Louis Truelock, 39, of 1900 W. Jackson.

The responses of Satchel, a slight youth with a limp resulting from a leg wound suffered in the Dec. 4 shooting, were typical. With his attorney, Kermit B. Coleman, standing close at hand, Satchel told Gerber:

"I have no answers."

Gerber pointed out that the defendant-witnesses were under no criminal charges in connection with the deaths of Hampton and Clark, and went through this dialog with attorney Coleman:

Gerber: "You're not going to deprive me of



James Clark, brother of slain Mark Clark, is among first witnesses.

my right to ask questions, are you?"

Coleman: "If you persist and insist, I have no course but to tell him (Satchel) to get down from the stand, put on his coat and go with me out of this room."

Gerber: "You don't even know what I'm going to ask him."

Coleman: "I don't want to know."

Asst. State's Atty. Thomas A. Hett, representing Hanrahan, interposed that the witnesses could refuse to answer only if they pleaded possible self-incrimination under the Fifth Amendment.

"I don't need any advice from you or



Det. Elwood Egan spent nearly an hour on stand.

anybody else about conducting this inquest," Gerber told Hett.

Angry shouting during Satchel's brief appearance interrupted what Coroner Andrew J. Toman had described earlier as an atmosphere of "peace, security and decorum."

Another Panther lawyer, Francis Andrew, spent nearly an hour questioning a Chicago detective, Elwood Egan of Area 4 homicide, the day's first witness.

The defense lawyer obviously was trying to get from Egan testimony that the killings of

Turn to Page 10

Continued from Page 5

Hampton and Clark were unnecessary. Egan replied that he spent only about 10 minutes in the apartment and that he made no detailed investigation of the circumstances.

The detective first quoted the leader of the police raiding party, Sgt. Daniel Groth, as saying that the nine Panthers in the apartment fired on the 14 raiding policemen without cause or warning. Under interrogation by the defense, he corrected the statement, saying he received no such information. Apparently Egan had misunderstood when asked about the matter originally.

"The coroner intends to be entirely fair in

his rulings," Gerber said, "But he intends to take no abuse, threats or insults from anyone here. We will tolerate no sensationalism or fanning of the flames of prejudice."

Fifty deputy sheriffs were stationed in the courtroom, the corridor outside and on other floors of the building, but an announced Black Panther Party demonstration did not come off.

The deputies' duties were confined to searching all persons for weapons before allowing them to enter the hearing room.

Detective Egan said he went to the apartment after being informed by radio that a policeman had been wounded there and that

he talked with Sgt. Groth.

"He (Groth) said his men were fired on and a gun battle ensued," Egan testified. Egan added that Groth told him the raiders went to the apartment with a search warrant, but were refused admittance.

Under interrogation by attorney Andrew, the detective was asked whether Groth told him at any time who had fired the first shots.

"No, he did not," Egan replied, indicating that he had not understood the question by Gerber when he gave the previous answer.

Egan said he went into a rear bedroom where Hampton's body was found on a bed and that he saw blood on the mattress and on the floor near the head of the bed.



Special Deputy Coroner Martin S. Gerber presides at the inquest into the death of two Black Panther Party leaders. (Drawings by Sun-Times artist Jack Ryan)