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Panther civil suit opens today; FBI link to be stressed

By Rob Warden

Before the 1969 Black Panther raid here, the FBI helped State's Atty. Edward V. Hanrahan's raiders prepare a detailed diagram of the Panther apartment, precisely locating Fred Hampton's bed.

The information on which the drawing was based was supplied by William O'Neal, who had been paid by the FBI to infiltrate the Chicago Panthers.

O'Neal was a keyman in the FBI's counterintelligence effort against the Panthers — an effort ordered by J. Edgar Hoover to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit and otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist hate-type organizations."

IN A MEMO to FBI field offices in 1968, Hoover wrote that a primary goal of the counterintelligence program was to prevent the rise of a black "messiah who could unify and electrify the black nationalist movement."

Since O'Neal's existence and the Hoover document became public in 1973, it has been suggested frequently by Panther

lawyers that perhaps Hoover saw Hampton as a potential "messiah" and that Hampton's death of two bullets fired into his brain by Hanrahan's raiders was a government-committed murder.

According to this theory, the FBI enticed Hanrahan and Chicago police to raid the West Side Panther apartment early the morning of Dec. 4, 1969, to "neutralize" Hampton.

THE THEORY will be propounded repeatedly during the trial of a \$47.7 million Panther damage suit that opens Wednesday before a six-member civil jury in U.S. District Court here.

U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Sam Perry, who will preside in the case, ruled late Tuesday that Panther lawyers may refer in their opening statements to the contents of heretofore secret FBI counterintelligence documents.

He also ruled that the lawyers defending Hanrahan and police and FBI officials named as defendants may refer to statements allegedly made by certain panthers who survived the raid that contradict statements they made to a grand



Judge Joseph Sam Perry

jury that later indicted Hanrahan.

A Cook County Circuit Court judge directed that criminal charges against Hanrahan and the raiding party be dropped after one of the statements was disclosed in court.

PANTHER LAWYERS argued against allowing the statements to be mentioned in the federal case, asserting that this violated the principle that statements made to attorneys by clients are secret.

Special security precautions were in effect Wednesday in Perry's courtroom as the opening statements were awaited.

The U.S. marshal office set up metal detectors at the door of the 25th-floor courtroom to prevent anyone from entering with a gun.