

to discredit—and perhaps jail—the heir apparent to Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's political fiefdom, Cook County State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan.

The case began with bullets and blood at 4:40 a.m. on Dec. 4, 1969, when 14 policemen assigned to Hanrahan's office raided a Chicago Black Panther redoubt, killing Fred Hampton and Mark Clark and wounding four others. The next day the Panthers guided newsmen through the scene of the shootout, attempting to prove that all the shots had been fired from the outside by the police. The authorities claimed that the Panthers had fired first.

Denuded Charge. Conflicting evidence provoked three separate grand jury investigations. The second inquiry concluded that more than 82 shots had been fired by the police and only one by the Panthers, and the third handed up indictments against Hanrahan and 13 co-defendants. They were accused of conspiring to present false evidence, rig an internal police department probe, and obstruct justice for the seven surviving Panthers. Trying to unravel the case in the 15-week trial without a jury, Judge Romiti said that he found it necessary "to engage in evidentiary striptease...to strip away the layers of rhetoric, of oratory, the emotional appeals, the speculation and conjecture in search of some basic hard evidence." Thus denuded, the conspiracy charge, to Romiti's eyes at least, seemed one of "inference pyramiding on inference."

More to the point, there was fresh evidence to suggest that the Panthers had fired on the police four times, and that five of the nine Panthers had been armed at the time of the raid. Without even waiting to hear defense witnesses, Romiti dismissed the case.

The acquittal, which virtually assures Hanrahan of re-election next week, has already set off further charges of impropriety. Andrew Barrett, executive secretary of the Chicago N.A.A.C.P. branches, quickly raised "serious questions about the integrity of the judge, who made a political rather than a judicial decision." Romiti, who enjoys one of the better reputations among Cook County's judges, conceded that "It was one of the damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't cases. It has been a case which has created its own self-charging, catalytic climate, not because of the nature of the offense but because of the person or persons involved."

One of those involved, at least obliquely, was Daley. He had attempted to dump Hanrahan from his team because he seemed politically poisonous. Now Daley declared the whole thing, presumably including his loss of faith in his protégé, "a mistake." Senator Adlai Stevenson III, who had withheld support even after Hanrahan was renominated, re-enlisted on the unity team. Hanrahan, sometimes called "Fast Eddie," cracked: "There's nothing like a fair-weather friend who comes to your aid when the fight is over."

TRIALS

Victory for Fast Eddie

The courtroom audience first gasped, then applauded as Cook County Circuit Judge Philip Romiti handed down his verdict: "The evidence is simply not sufficient to establish or prove any conspiracy against any defendant." Thus ended an enormously tangled legal proceeding that had long threatened

HANRAHAN AFTER THE VERDICT



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