

# Judge Acquits Hanrahan of Plot In '69 Chicago Raid on Panthers

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CHICAGO, Oct. 25—State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan and 13 co-defendants were acquitted today by a judge of conspiring to obstruct justice in connection with the police raid in which a Black Panther leader, Fred Hampton, was slain nearly three years ago.

Judge Philip J. Romiti issued the verdict in the nonjury trial after the prosecution had completed its arguments.

The verdict seemed certain to enhance Mr. Hanrahan's already bright prospects for a second term. Re-election would establish him as one of the city's most powerful Democrats and the major potential suc-

cessor to Mayor Richard J. Daley, who is his patron.

Gasps, then applause broke out in the crowded courtroom as Judge Romiti dismissed the indictment, ruling that the defense did not have to call any witnesses because "evidence is simply not sufficient to establish or prove any conspiracy against any defendant."

The verdict appeared to end the legal aspects of the controversy that began on the morning of Dec. 4, 1969, when a squad of policemen assigned to the State's Attorney's office raided a first-floor apartment in a run-down building in the

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West Side slums. Gunfire broke out, and when it stopped Mr. Hampton, the 21-year-old Illinois Panther chairman, and Mark Clark, 22, a Panther organizer from Peoria, were dead.

The police said that the Panthers had opened fire on them and that a fierce gun battle had ensued.

The Panthers opened the cramped, five-room apartment at 2337 West Monroe Street inspection, and thousands of people, trooping through, noted that the bullet holes were in the places where the Panthers, not the police, had been.

### City Divided

The controversy mounted, deeply dividing the city, and refused to die. Mr. Hanrahan gave a newspaper pictures purporting to show bullet holes, which turned out to be nail heads. He also staged a television re-enactment of the raid.

A Federal grand jury investigated and found that the police



United Press International  
Edward V. Hanrahan after he was cleared in conspiracy case in Chicago.

had fired more than 90 shots while only one could be attributed to the Panthers. The grand jury criticized the internal police investigation and reported contradictions in the police testimony, but issued no indictments.

A special county prosecutor was named, and after a struggle in the courts, indictments were handed up on Aug. 24, 1971.

### Judge Comments

As the 13-and-a-half-week trial ended this morning, Judge Romiti said of the prosecution's case:

"The court found it necessary to engage in an evidentiary strip tease, so to speak, to strip away the layers of rhetoric, the emotional appeals, the speculation and conjecture in search of some basic hard evidence.

"An inference drawn from another inference, which in turn is drawn from an inference—inference pyramiding on inference—amount to not much more than conjecture and speculation."

The defendants had waived a jury trial.

Judge Romiti, who won election to the bench on the same ticket as Mr. Hanrahan in 1968, is a former dean of his alma mater, De Paul University Law School, the training ground for many local Democrats, including the Mayor.

### 'Self-Charging Climate'

"The court is aware, painfully so, that this is one of those you're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't cases," the judge remarked in his ruling. "It has been a case, regrettably so, 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. In another time, with other persons, I dare say this case would not have generated one line of print."

As happy relatives, other policemen and Democrats employed at the Criminal Court Building pushed through the aisles to congratulate the freed defendants, the special prosecutor, Barnabas Sears, passed out a prepared statement.

"The court has spoken," the statement read. "It is my duty as a lawyer participant in the case to treat that judgment of the court with respect. This I do.

"Respect for law and the maintenance of the judicial system so essential to our survival as a free society alike demand that I do this. I have no further comment."

"It looks like you were expecting this," someone said.

The 70-year-old Mr. Sears, a former president of the American Trial Lawyers Association, whose record is regarded as distinguished, clamped a gray fedora on his white hair with both hands and did not reply.

He told friends that he had taken the case because of his belief in the sanctity of the law.

When he attempted to hand up the indictments, he was shouted at, held in contempt and fined \$50 an hour by Chief Criminal Court Judge John A. Power, a neighbor and close friend of Mayor Daley.