

# Body vanished, <sup>RDM</sup> <sub>3/3/77</sub> commission told <sup>Ee7</sup>

By MELANIE YAP

A MAN who heard students force the door of an office in which Dr Melville Edelstein was locked, yesterday told the Cillie Commission of Inquiry how he saw the body lying on the floor before it mysteriously vanished minutes later.

Mr Rudolph Hobkirk, an employment officer at the Central Western Jabavu youth centre in Soweto, said he had locked himself in the centre's kitchen when more than 1 000 students surrounded the building on June 16.

Dr Edelstein had arrived at the centre minutes before saying: "This is it, I am telling you. Here is trouble if there ever was," Mr Hobkirk told the commission.

He said Dr Edelstein locked himself in a social worker's office while children outside stoned their cars and set them alight. The crowd started stoning the centre, and then broke into the office where Dr Edelstein was.

"I heard a loud voice say: 'Jou bleddie wit kaf-

fer, vandag vrek jy,' and a loud commotion followed. I heard him say 'Oh no'", Mr Hobkirk said.

Youths aged 16 to 20 then rammed down the kitchen door with wooden benches.

"They packed on to me, jerking me around, bumping me against the wall and stove, at the same time taking everything off me. One young boy of about 12 raised his arm with a knife in his hand and stabbed at me, but could not reach me because of others in his way," Mr Hobkirk said.

He said he escaped into a storeroom when a young Black girl started speaking to the crowd.

He said the people tried to break down the storeroom door, but a helicopter flew overhead and dropped teargas into the building.

"After some difficulty I got the lock open and ran out of the storeroom through the kitchen. Dr Edelstein was lying face down in the general waiting room in front of the

kitchen door. The right side of his forehead was covered in blood.

"He appeared dead to me, but I was affected by the gas and could not stop to examine him," he said.

Mr Hobkirk said he ran to the helicopter, which had landed on the grass outside the centre, where he fell down with exhaustion and shock. He told a police officer in the helicopter that Dr Edelstein was lying dead in the office.

"We went back to the centre but Dr Edelstein had vanished. I said it was strange, 'he was lying dead just here'," Mr Hobkirk said.

They looked through the building but could not find the body and saw furniture burning inside.

Outside they met Colonel Gerber and heard a report on the radio that a man was lying in the grass alongside the road a hundred yards away. Mr Hobkirk said it was Dr Edelstein, but how the body reached the place where it was found "is a mystery to me".

## 'Govt turned a deaf ear'

Staff Reporter

A JUDICIAL commission into riots which occurred three years before the Sharpeville clashes had brought no positive action to eliminate Black frustrations, the Cillie Commission of Inquiry heard yesterday.

Giving evidence, Mr Patrick Lewis, former mayor of Johannesburg and member of the non-European Affairs Committee for 11 years, said that 20 years ago the Johannesburg City Council financed an independent inquiry into causes of violence in September, 1957, after the Government had refused.

No Government officials were prepared to give evidence before the

inquiry which was headed by three retired judges.

In their report the judges listed "tsotsi" attacks on residents, ethnic grouping, socio-economic conditions affecting the young and migratory labour as causes of the riots.

Mr Justice Cillie asked Mr Lewis to submit a full report of that commission's findings and recommendations.

Mr Lewis handed in a copy of a six-page letter which he had written after Sharpeville to the then Minister of Bantu Administration, Dr M. D. C. de Wet Nel, listing difficulties and frustrations of Blacks.

Mr Lewis said he wanted

to emphasise that these disabilities were nothing new, and although they had been brought to the attention of the authorities, remedial steps were not taken.

Mr Lewis said the department had a "deliberate obstructive policy" on the provision of housing in urban areas.

Mr Lewis said in his dealings with the department as chairman of the Non-European Affairs Committee for the Johannesburg City Council he found very little creative thinking on urban Blacks.

"I think that officials often withheld information from the Minister and at other times failed to implement decisions taken by Ministers," he said.

**Collection Number: A1132**

**Collection Name: Patrick LEWIS Papers, 1949-1987**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

*Location:* Johannesburg

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