

LFP/026/0163/108

11.9.59

Treason inquiry surprise

ADJOURNED FOR 4 MONTHS: WITNESSES FROM OVERSEAS

THE DEFENCE WILL CALL WITNESSES from overseas when it opens its case at the treason inquiry next year. This was announced at the Drill Hall, Johannesburg, today when the nine-month-old hearing, with the Crown case virtually concluded, adjourned for four months.

This was one of the number of surprises produced by the defence today. Opening the defence case at a preparatory examination is an unusual course. And to prepare their case they asked for an adjournment of "at least" five months as against the one-month recess proposed by the Crown.

The leader of the defending legal team, Mr. N. E. Rosenberg, Q.C., said that as a result of the expert evidence on Communism given by Prof. A. H. Murray, the defence had been in correspondence with "eminent and highly placed" authorities overseas as well as in the Union, who had studied portions of the evidence.

For the purpose of taking statements from such experts, with a view to calling them as defence witnesses, Mr. V. C. Berrange (a defence advocate) had already applied for a passport and would leave for England and the United States immediately this was granted.

As a result of the evidence on the Mau Mau campaign led by the Crown it might also be necessary for defence lawyers to travel to Kenya and London so that rebutting testimony could be brought.

OTHER WITNESSES

Other defence witnesses to be called would include the accused themselves and many others who had occupied high positions in the congresses.

This would also involve careful preparation and the taking of statements in many parts of the country.

Asking for a five-months adjournment, Mr. Rosenberg said: "These proceedings, taking into account their length, the complexity of the Crown case and the number of accused persons charged, are certainly without parallel in this country."

"In order to answer the Crown's allegations it is essential, both in the interests of the accused and the interests of justice, that a lengthy adjournment be granted."

The defence had originally suggested a three-months adjournment, but it had become obvious that this would be too short now.

Because of shortage of funds,

"End-of-term" at treason investigation

THERE was an end-of-school atmosphere at the Drill Hall today as the treason inquiry adjourned for its longest recess yet. Most of the accused from other parts of the country were leaving for home.

As the court rose there was a muffled cheer, then handshakes and farewells all round.

The four-month recess will mean for the 156 accused a brief return to some sort of normal life.

The majority intend looking for jobs to help keep them on their own feet. Those who are doctors and lawyers will return to professional practice.

The first book on the treason inquiry is due to be published in England early next month.

It is a joint effort by Lionel Forman, one of the accused, and E. S. "Solly" Sachs, the former South African trade unionist now living in Britain.

they had not yet even been able to obtain copies of the 8,000-page record and the 10,000 documentary exhibits.

"END OF THEIR TETHER"

Mr. J. Slovo (one of the 156 accused who is appearing in his own defence) said the accused desired nothing more than a quick and speedy end to the case.

They had "reached the end of their tether in the economic sense as well as many other senses."

The magistrate, Mr. F. C. A. Wessel, said he considered a three-months adjournment should be sufficient for the defence.

But because this meant a resumption in mid-December, with the Christmas holidays following soon after, he fixed the date at January 13.

When the hearing resumes the Crown will complete two weeks of formal evidence before the defence opens its case.