

Sands dies of starvation

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — Irish Republican Army guerrilla Bobby Sands died early Tuesday in the 66th day of his hunger strike at Belfast's Maze prison, the British Northern Ireland Office reported.

It said the 27-year-old Sands, who had campaigned from his jail cell and was elected to the British Parliament on April 9, died at 1:17 a.m. (5:17 p.m. PDT Monday) in the prison's hospital wing.

His death was expected to bring a new storm of violence to this British province, torn by a decade of bloody underground warfare between Roman Catholic and Protestant extremists.

Sands was the 13th Irish nationalist hunger striker to die in British jails this century and the first to perish in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Office issued a statement saying: "Mr. Robert Sands, a prisoner in the

Maze prison, died today at 1:17. He took his own life by refusing food and medical intervention for 66 days."

Sands lapsed into a coma early Sunday and never regained consciousness.

His family had been at his bedside along with a Catholic priest.

Mobs of rioting Catholic youths had staged git-and-run attacks against Belfast police and British troops with firebombs and acid-filled milk bottles Monday night as the emaciated Sands was sinking toward death.

Ignoring pleas for calm from Protestant and Catholic leaders, Sands' family and Irish nationalist activist Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, roaming gangs of up to 300 youths stoned police and troops throughout the day in the Falls Road section of West Belfast.

The area once was dubbed

"ambush alley" by British soldiers and is the heart of Catholic militancy and Irish Republican Army sympathy.

Firebombs were hurled at police patrols in another Catholic area, the Short Strand, where there were two arrests. Police said mobs overturned and burned two trucks, and one policeman was injured.

Police fired plastic bullets to break up the gangs, but they quickly reformed on adjacent streets.

Another hunger striker, Francis Hughes, 25, once the IRA's most wanted gunman, was in the 51st day of his fast and continued to deteriorate rapidly.

Hughes' brother, Oliver, 31, said after spending several hours at his bedside: "He is virtually unconscious and appears to be slipping in and out of a coma. The end can only be a short time away."

State court upholds pot civil statutes

SALEM (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals today upheld state laws against possessing marijuana in rejecting arguments that the statutes are unconstitutionally vague.

In a case from Union County, Keith Mellinger attacked the laws in appealing his conviction of possessing more than one ounce of marijuana.

Lawyers for Mellinger cited language forbidding possession of dried leaves and stems but exempting "mature stalks" from the prohibition.

The terms, Mellinger contended, are not adequately defined to inform persons of average intelligence whether an amount of marijuana they might possess would make them guilty of a felony or of a non-criminal offense.

Possessing one ounce or less is a civil violation with a maximum \$100 fine.

But the court said the fact that experts might disagree as to what is a stalk or stem doesn't make the laws unconstitutionally vague.

"The statutes need not be drafted with such precision that citizens will never hazard their liberty upon an incorrect assessment of their conduct," the court said in an opinion by Judge William Richardson.

making the news

From Associated Press Reports

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pres. Ronald Reagan applied his soft-sell approach to Democratic congressmen Monday, assuring them their concerns about specific items in the budget would be addressed after a crucial House vote on the overall spending proposal.

Reagan appeared to be having some success and the outcome appeared less and less in doubt. Several who had made no commitment previously emerged from the meeting fingering gift boxes of presidential cufflinks and indicating they would support the administration.

As the three hours of meetings at the White House were breaking up, House Speaker Thomas O'Neill Jr., D-Mass., told reporters at the Capitol that he was lobbying his own party members but was getting no commitments that they would stay in line.

If Republicans stay solid, a switch of 26 Democrats would give Reagan his biggest budget victory yet. GOP leaders say they expect only one Republican to vote against the president.

PORTLAND — Thirty-nine groups filed a suit today in the Oregon Court of Appeals to overturn a state administrative rule prohibiting publicly funded abortions for many poor women.

The current rule requires that pregnant women be on welfare at the time of conception if they are to receive a Medicaid abortion.

The Department of Human Resources rule also limits one Medicaid abortion to women older than 18 and two for those younger, except in cases of rape, incest or cases involving danger of death.

The suit is the fifth of its kind in the United States, following similar cases in Massachusetts and California where courts have required Medicaid to pay for medically necessary abortions, representatives of the groups said.

The suit says the Oregon rule is unconstitutional because it prevents poor women from having the same choices on abortion as wealthy women, the representatives said.

Filing the suit were churches, women's groups, medical and minority organizations.

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