Jailed Bobby Seale Calls Panther Raids 'Genocide'

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SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 12 — Bobby Seale today defiantly asserted that the crackdown on his Black Panther Party was winning it new strength across the country.

Seale, the Panther's national chairman, said this of raids on his militant group's offices and the jailing of its leaders:

"It's not stifling the party. The more they attack, the more support we get . . . the more they attack, the more branches we get. They are out to commit genocide against the Black Panther Party but what they don't see is that (people understand) they are out to commit genocide against all the poor people."

In a two-hour interview at the county jail here, he variously described "they" as the "power structure," "rich, greedily, avaricious businessmen and demagogic politicians," "the Nixon-Agnew system of lying," and "racist" police.

"The raids have definitely made more people aware that facism exists, that the government is obtaining genocide against the black people," he said.

The interview, arranged by Seale's attorney took place in a bare, concrete-walled conference room on the seventh floor of police headquarters on Bryant Street. A few yards away the 5 by 7½ foot cell where Seale is kept in isolation. He is awaiting a hearing on Tuesday that will determine whether he will be extradited to Connecticut where he faces charges of conspiring to kidnap and murder an alleged Panther turncoat.

Seale has been jailed here nearly four weeks, after a mistrial was declared in his Chicago case charging him with conspiracy to provoke a riot at the Democratic National Convention. He complained in a even voice about his treatment here.

Not long after he arrived — he could not recall the date — he said police put him in the "hole" or punishment cell for reading a Panther Party newspaper. Ten officers, he said, dragged him off, one struck him in the testicles and another "tried to choke me."

He said he languished in the punishment cell for 14 hours, lying in an inch of water. Every two hours, he said, the open-hole toilet flushed up human waste because the plumbing wasn't working.

Seale also complained that he could only read books from the prison library and they are the "Tom, Dick, Jane and Lone Ranger" variety and "I have no use for them."

The Panthers' second ranking leader—Huey Newton, the "national defense minister," heads the higher-archy—was questioned repeatedly about his group's affinity for weapons. Again and again, he insisted that Panther guns were only for defense against "racist" police.

"If you're not armed, you're in slavery or can be enslaved at any time," he said. "If you're black and beautiful and don't want to defend it, you're a fool.

Wasn't the party's slogan of "Kill The Pigs" an incitement to shoot police, Seale was asked?

"Not at all. The slogan simply means defense of ourselves because 80 per cent of the police believe in brutality and racism."

How could a handful of lightly armed Panthers overcome the organized force of the authorities?

"The fascist government is less than 10 million. We will win over the masses."

The police attacks on the Panthers, he declared, had nothing to do with law violations. "The real reason they want to destroy us, he said "is because the party is setting the correct example for the people." He cited the party's free breakfasts for ghetto children, its distribution of medicine and clothing and its insistence that the ghetto community name and control its own police.

These he called "revolutionary, socialistic programs" that expose the government" for what it is—greedy and embarrassed businessmen and demagogic politicians."

"The problem starts from the hungry stomachs . . . with the desire not to have pigs in our community brutalizing us."

Despite the jailing of many Panther leaders, Seale was confident that new ones would emerge. Most important, he insisted, the Panther "ideology" remains.

He talked briefly of his Chicago trial where Federal Judge Julius Hoffman gagged and chained him after his repeated demands to represent himself. Seale denied that he was deliberately trying to provoke the judge and create a record that could not stand up on appeal.