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Two Panthers Apologize for Court Scuffle

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NEW HAVEN, Conn.—Two top Black Panther Party officials jailed for contempt of court last week were freed Tuesday after they apologized for a courtroom scuffle with sheriff's deputies.

After the apologies, party Chairman Bobby G. Seale promised Judge Harold M. Mulbey that decorum would be maintained in the Connecticut superior courtroom where he and 13 other Panthers have been charged with murder.

Freed from jail Tuesday were David Hilliard, Panther chief of staff, and acting head of the party Emory Douglas, the party's minister of culture.

Judge Mulbey ordered that the six-month sentences against the two men be reduced to the seven days they have served since the disturbance last week.

From Oakland

The two Panther officials had come from Oakland to observe the pretrial hearing in the Panther murder case.

Minutes later, Judge Mulbey accepted apologies from two Black Panther supporters from Bridgeport, Conn., who also were cited for contempt last week. He commuted their 20-and 25-day jail terms to time served.

The four public apologies came during Seale's first court appearance since he was arraigned last month for allegedly ordering the May, 1969, killing of Alex Rackley, another Panther.

As Hilliard, Douglas, Seale and the two Panther supporters stood before

the bench, San Francisco attorney Charles Garry, general counsel for the Panthers, told Mulbey that he had asked Hilliard and Douglas to come to New Haven "to help keep order in the courtroom."

"It wasn't our intention to cause any disruptions in this courtroom or any other courtroom," said Hilliard. "We're advocates of upholding the Constitution."

Hilliard, 27, is under federal indictment for threatening to kill President Nixon. He has denied the charge, which stems from a speech he made Nov. 15 at an antiwar rally in San Francisco.

After Hilliard apologized, Douglas, also 27, said that he had "stood up (last week in court) to defend my human rights." He added that he was unaware that the nonuniformed deputy who had first struggled with Hilliard was an "officer of the court." Douglas said he had come only to "keep peace."

Judge Mulbey then allowed Seale, dressed in a bright blue turtleneck shirt, to speak, although Seale was not in court when last week's fracas erupted.

Need for Decorum

"I understand that you are trying to see that we have a fair trial," Seale told the judge. "To have a fair trial, we also understand the necessity for peaceful decorum in the courtroom."

Then Seale...

decorum in the courtroom," he told them in a firm tone.

Seale was sentenced to four years in jail last November by Judge Julius J. Hoffman for repeatedly interrupting the Chicago Eight conspiracy trial. Seale has claimed that he disturbed the Chicago trial only after he had been denied his counsel, Garry.

After Seale spoke, Judge Mulbey reduced the contempt sentences and said that he "was pleased to hear that there will be no further interference by the

Black Panther Party."

"I'm not here to try any political trial," he said. "There will be a fair jury trial and I'm going to see

that it's done properly," Mulbey said.

Seale will appear in court today on a pretrial motion for bail.