

Panther Chief Denies Ordering Victim Slain

NEW HAVEN, Conn., Aug. 21. (UPI)—The defense rested its case today in the murder-conspiracy trial of Black Panther Lonnie McClucas with a flat statement by Panther party chief Bobby Seale that he never ordered the death of an alleged police informer.

"I never ordered anybody killed," Seale said. "The party never orders anybody killed."

Seale, under cross-examination by State's Attorney Arnold Markle, said the party dealt with informers by printing their pictures in the Panther newspaper and expelling them.

Trial Resumes Tuesday

Seale, national Panther Party chairman, was the defense's final witness. Attorneys' summations were to begin Tuesday when the trial resumes, and the case will probably go to the jury late Wednesday or early Thursday.

Seale testified that he had never heard the name Alex Rackley, the alleged informer, until a group of fellow Panthers were arrested for Rackley's torture-murder.

He took the stand against the advice of chief Panther attorney Charles A. Garry of San Francisco.

McLucas, Seale and six other Panthers are charged with conspiring to kidnap and to murder in the May 21, 1969, death of New York Panther Alex Rackley. Seale and the others are awaiting trial and Garry said he had therefore advised Seale not to testify.

The 33-year-old co-founder of the Panther Party conferred with Garry and his two top fellow Panther leaders—fellow founder Huey P. Newton and chief of staff David Hilliard—before taking the stand in Superior Court "to testify about the truth."

Describes Visit

Seale described his visit to the New Haven Panther headquarters during the time Rackley allegedly was being tortured there with boiling water to make him confess that he had informed on the "Panther 21" arrested in an alleged bomb plot in New York



BOBBY SEALE

... final defense witness

a month earlier.

George Sams Jr., a Panther who has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the case and testified for the prosecution, told the court earlier that Seale gave him the order to "off" Rackley, meaning to kill him, during the visit.

Newton, free on bail to await a retrial on manslaughter charges in the death of a California policeman, told a news conference in the nearby offices of the New Haven Council of Churches that "George Sams and the pigs are responsible for the murder of Alex Rackley." Describing Sams as "a maniac," Newton said "Sams and Sams alone

gave the order to shoot Alex Rackley."

Seale said he "never entered the Panther headquarters except to make a phone call" briefly to his office in California. Under questioning by defense attorney Theodore I. Koskoff, he said he knew nothing about "a brother being interrogated at Panther headquarters" and that if he had known someone was being "tortured" there:

"I would have raised the devil. It is totally alien to how the party operates."

Tells of Meeting

Seale said the only time he met Sams was in 1968 when Stokely Carmichael, former

head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, "was begging" him to let Sams back into the party. Sams, a former bodyguard to Carmichael, had been "kicked out" of the Panthers when he "stabbed a brother in the leg," Seale said.

"That's when I saw him the first time. I've never seen him since," Seale said.

Seale said that after leaving Panther headquarters he went to the home of fellow defendant Erica Huggins where "there was a group of people talking." Asked whether Rackley's name came up, Seale said:

"No, the first time I heard Rackley's name was after all the people got busted."

McLucas testified Thursday that he had taken a message to Seale at the apartment where he heard Miss Huggins say, "There was this brother from New York being questioned," and Seale reply, "I don't have time to relate to nothing like that. Whoever is in charge will deal with it."

Meaning of "Off"

Under Koskoff's questioning, Seale also denied that "off" means to kill in Panther vernacular. Asked the meaning of the Panthers' phrase, "Off the pigs," Seale said:

"It has a very symbolic meaning. It means getting the power structure out of the ghetto."

He flatly denied it meant either to kill police or anyone else.