

"It's a frame-up" — Bobby Seale

Following is an interview with Black Panther party chairman Bobby Seale conducted by Guardian West Coast staff writer Art Goldberg in San Francisco County Jail Aug. 25. Seale was arrested a week earlier and held on a variety of Connecticut charges including murder in connection with the death of Alex Rackley, who police claim was a turncoat Party member killed in May by other Panthers under orders from Seale. The party chairman and other indicted Panthers proclaim their innocence. In a Viewpoint Aug. 30, the Guardian declared the charges were a ruse intended to destroy the Panthers. "He looked a little tired," Goldberg wrote of his encounter with Seale in prison, "but his voice communicated the same enthusiasm it had when I spoke with him a few days before his arrest. In fact, he seemed more optimistic than most movement people I've met out of jail. As we rounded a corner walking down the hall, I noticed him flash a quick fist salute to another prisoner. We were shown a room normally reserved for lawyers and clients and began the interview."

Guardian: What do you think are the political reasons behind your arrest?

Seale: The reasons are pretty clear. When the announcement went out at the United Front Against Fascism conference last month that the National Committees to Combat Fascism would be set up, we wound up with over 100 cities where white people would be working along with the Black Panther party to combat fascism. In other words, you'd have these committees—political organizing bureaus of the Black Panther party—all across the country, in 100 cities, with all kinds of people, black and white, working in them.

Then, it is clear that the Black Panther party has 30 million black people listening to it—whether they agree with the party or not—and they understand what the party is doing with its free breakfast for children program, community control of police drive and other programs.

The Nixon administration knows that when the Black Panther party speaks, black people listen and many progressive white people and organizations listen also. They have seen us constantly raise the struggle to a higher level than it has been in recent years and they have seen us put the struggle on an organized level.

They have seen that in the first community control of police petition drive which we put together with the Peace and Freedom party last year, we got 10,000 signatures in six days in the black community in Oakland, using only 85 people. We already have community control petition drives set up in four cities in the Bay Area alone, in Richmond, Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco. That's why they trumped up charges on me and on other Panthers in leadership positions, people like Erika Huggins and the leadership of the Connecticut chapter and Langdon Williams in Colorado.

Guardian: What about these latest charges?

Seale: Let me say this. I don't know Alex Rackley. I never saw him in Connecticut. I don't know him, period. As for [police informer] George Sams, it took me a while to remember who he was and then I remembered he was known as "Detroit George." The central committee kicked him out of the party in April 1968 for stabbing a brother, Mark Johnson, in the leg. About six weeks later, Stokely Carmichael came out to Oakland, and begged me, literally begged me, to ask the central committee to let George Sams back in. This was about a month after the April 1968 shootout. I remember at the time making the statement that George Sams' ideology wasn't together at all, that the brother didn't know where he was at, but Stokely begged me so I asked the central committee to let him back in the party.

We'd also heard some rumors about George Sams having the same black racist attitude as Stokely Carmichael. I don't remember seeing him at all after that, but the brothers informed me that he had disappeared for a couple of months and showed up in Oakland again. Then two or three weeks before I went to Con-

necticut, David Brothers called up from our New York office saying George Sams had just cussed him out—and who was George Sams? We didn't know what the hell he was doing in New York in the first place. Anyway, George Sams is more than likely a black racist, provocateur agent working with the federal pigs or some other pig agency.

I was invited to New Haven by a student group at Yale. I arrived there between four and five in the afternoon May 19. I ate dinner and

went to my speaking engagement which was at eight or nine in the evening. I spoke, left the hall, went and got some sleep at a place someone arranged for me and got up early in the morning and drove to Kennedy Airport in New York, where I arrived at eight in the morning. I was back in Oakland May 20. They say Alex Rackley was killed May 21. My probation officer, Dave Adams, has the complete records of all my travel.

When [Connecticut Panther] Erika Huggins and I were going to the place I was speaking, she pointed out eight or 10 dudes posing as a Panther security guard or something, only they weren't Panthers. Erika was about to be named deputy chairman of the Connecticut chapter. She had been sending us reports on how the brothers there didn't seem to know the correct line of the party. It seems this guy Jose Gonzales who was running the party there was an agent or something. Erika was going to send us information about him so we could publish it, with his picture in the Panther paper. That's how we deal with agents or suspected agents—publish their pictures in the Panther paper.

As I say, Erika worked pretty closely with the party leadership. She was just getting over the death of her husband John, who was killed by Ron Karenga's pigs down in Los Angeles. [Mrs. Huggins is now in jail on the same charges as Seale.] So that's what all this so-called conspiracy and plot is all about. It's a frame-up.

Guardian: Will the Panthers develop any new methods to deal with these types of arrests?

Seale: Well, if we're viciously attacked at our homes, we'll defend our doors, just like the brothers in Chicago did.

Guardian: But how will the party continue with all the top leadership in jail, exile or on trial?

Seale: This is the way to develop the party. We've had all our people go through political education classes. We look upon all our party

members as leaders. This will make the party stronger. Once a person has a correct understanding of Marxist-Leninist principles, then goes forth into the community and places those principles into action, he is a revolutionary.

Our party workers know hundreds of people in the black community. During the past two months we've had an intense program of sending our people into the community to talk with black people. And the response has been 99% receptive to the Black Panther party in homes

in the black community. People say, "Come on in. Explain this or that to me." All our party members function in this way. We serve the people, and teach by example, moving the struggle from a lower to a higher level.

Guardian: But aren't all these attacks threatening the life of the Black Panther party?

Seale: I think that attacking us is the biggest mistake the power structure can make. It is good for our revolutionary principles to be attacked. It's good that they try to paint us as without any virtues, because when we feed 15,000 kids across the country, the people see through that kind of propaganda. The people aren't stupid. They see through it. They see how we've been attacked and murdered and had our offices broken into. They know that Bobby Hutton was murdered and Huey P. Newton was shot and Eldridge Cleaver forced into exile. And at the same time, the people see that the party has come up with practical socialist programs like breakfast for children, liberation schools, free health clinics and black community information centers.

Guardian: What about the health clinics? When will they open?

Seale: We're going to open them five at a time in Oakland and San Francisco. We're going to open five health clinics in Oakland this fall and five in San Francisco, two in Richmond and one over in West Berkeley. The health clinics will probably be located in Black Community Information Centers which we'll be setting up, to inform the community. We'll also be setting up Neighborhood Centers to Combat Fascism. They'll probably be located on the edge, between the black and the white community.

Then we're going to start this clothing drive. We're going to give free clothing out to children. We're going to ask businessmen to donate clothing so the kids can have at least one change of clothing and one pair of shoes and

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Chairman Seale in Panther office in Berkeley. He was arrested Aug. 19.