

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF EXECUTIVE SESSION TESTIMONY ON MAY 13, 1970¹

On May 13, 1970, in executive session the committee received the testimony of a witness concerning Black Panther Party activities in Seattle, Wash. The witness joined the Seattle Black Panther Party and was a member for approximately 18 months in the 1968-69 period. While a member, the witness provided law enforcement agencies, on a voluntary basis, certain information pertaining to crimes which members of the Seattle Black Panther Party had committed or were planning to commit.

The witness requested to testify in executive session, asking that identification be withheld because of fear of possible physical retaliation by the Seattle Black Panther Party. The transcript of this witness' testimony is retained in committee files. That testimony, ordered to be printed by committee resolution of December 3, 1970, is summarized as follows:

The Seattle Black Panther Party chapter was formed in April or May 1968. It initially drew members from a predecessor black organization in Seattle led by John Henry Wilson, known as the Voodoo Man. In May 1968, Bobby Seale came to Seattle and appointed Aaron Dixon captain of the Seattle Black Panther Party. Other local individuals instrumental in the formation of the Seattle chapter were Elmer Dixon, Aaron's brother; Curtiss Harris; Willy Brazier; Clark Williamson; Earl Brooks; Larry Tasino; and Buddy Yates. In December 1969, Aaron Dixon was captain and Elmer Dixon was second in command.

The peak membership of the Seattle Black Panther Party chapter, occurring shortly after its formation, was approximately 200. These were active members who could be counted on to participate in most Panther-sponsored activity. In late 1969, the number of active members had decreased to approximately 100. During this interval only one member was expelled by the party; the rest left voluntarily.

The Seattle Panthers averaged in age between 14 and 22; most were under 18. They had little education and few were in school or had jobs. Panther members dropped out of school because Panther activities interfered with their school work. Aaron and Elmer Dixon told children at a breakfast program they should drop out of school because "whitey was not teaching them anything."

The Seattle Panthers operated a breakfast for children program in at least three locations. One program at Madrona Church, when observed on several occasions during 1969, had an average approximate attendance of 25 children. The children were taught by Aaron Dixon to hate "whitey" and to throw rocks at police cars. Elmer Dixon read to the children from the "red book," *QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG*, and also talked to them about Fidel Castro and Karl Marx. The Panthers told the children it is "okay" to steal, throw rocks, break windows, and use a particular obscenity, which one Panther said was the only word American Negroes had contributed to the dictionary.

The Panther members present at the Madrona breakfast program had in their possession weapons which were visible to the children. The witness knew of one check given to the Panthers to purchase milk for the breakfast program. The canceled check, when returned to the donor, showed an endorsement by United Airlines.

The Panthers maintained a free medical clinic at 173 20th Avenue² in Seattle. It was open on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Not many people used the medical

¹ On Dec. 3, 1970, the committee duly authorized the public release of this summary and ordered it included as an appendix to the May 1970 hearing record concerning Black Panther Party activities in Seattle, Wash.

² Address of Seattle Black Panther Party headquarters as of May 13, 1970.

clinic (which was more of a referral service) because of a lack of privacy and the presence of Panthers with guns. Dr. John Green, a neurosurgeon from the University of Washington, helped establish and operate the clinic. The witness contended Dr. Green suggested that it might be better to live in Cuba, where everyone is equal, working in the sugarcane fields.

During 1968 the Panthers conducted weekly meetings on Tuesday nights for the general public. They were held at Panther headquarters and at Aaron Dixon's house. The meetings were generally informal and of an informational nature.

Classes for Panther members only were held on an irregular basis at Aaron Dixon's house and Panther headquarters. Panther members were taught to live by the bullet and the gun and take nothing off "whitey." This meant "if whitey puts his hands on you, kill." Aaron Dixon instructed the members from *QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG*. On one occasion, Aaron and Elmer Dixon instructed the members to get a knife and cut a cat's or dog's throat—in line with a recommendation from Panther national chairman Bobby Seale—so they would know what it is like to be able to kill a living organism.

Panthers conducted classes in "boosting" [shoplifting] just before the 1968 Christmas holidays. Two local leaders* and an unidentified third man whose first name was Steve were instructors. "Steve" was an ex-convict who supposedly had expertise in "boosting." Members were taught how to shoplift various items and were instructed to bring certain of them back for the personal use of one of the leaders.* On one occasion he called a meeting and told the assembled members to get him a record player. Two members* thereafter stole a Packard-Bell television set from a home in Seattle and gave it to him. The witness said the leader* knew the television set had been stolen.

Members of the Seattle Panthers participated in speaking engagements. The principal speakers were Aaron and Elmer Dixon and Bobby White. Dr. Green, the neurosurgeon, helped Aaron and Elmer Dixon write some speeches. Aaron Dixon received as much as \$100 for a speech. Violence and revolution were often advocated in speeches purportedly in vulgar and obscene terms by the Dixons. Aaron Dixon would always say, "Our revolution has not begun yet. It has not begun and we must prepare ourselves for a revolution."

For a period of approximately 18 months, the Panthers rented an office building from Benjamin Brill. He rented it to them "through fear, he had no choice." The Panthers only paid him 1 month's rent³ and vandalized the building.

The witness said Mr. Brill alleged that Panthers broke into Brill's office and stole his checkbook. One of the Panther leaders* wrote a \$25 check and cashed it at a food store. Mr. Brill said he didn't stop payment on the check because he was afraid as he and his wife were very old. The witness testified that on one occasion the Panthers, because they wanted to have pictures taken in front of his building, knocked the 70-year-old Mr. Brill to the ground and then made him go into his office.

Members of the Seattle Black Panther Party kept firearms in their possession. Agents from the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division of the U.S. Treasury executed a search warrant to obtain what was thought to be an automatic rifle

³ Prior to leasing the office building, the Panthers were required to pay a sum equivalent to 2 months' rent in advance as a deposit. This money, in addition to the 1 month's rent actually paid, was retained by Mr. Brill when the Panthers vacated the premises at 1127 1/2 34th Avenue. See p. 4354.

*Whenever an asterisk appears, a Seattle Black Panther Party leader or member was identified, by name, as involved in the commission of a crime. The names are deleted to avoid prejudicing pending or future investigations and/or prosecutions.

kept in the apartment of Elmer Dixon. The weapon was subsequently returned to him when it was determined to be semiautomatic.⁴

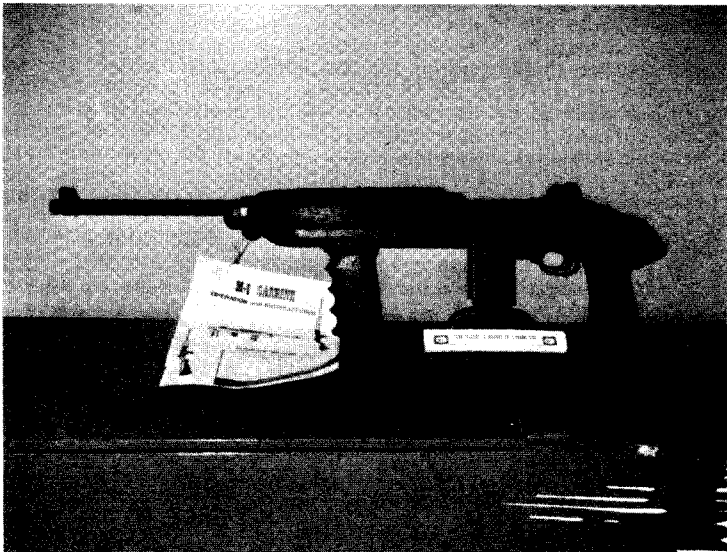
During 1968, the Seattle Panthers conducted group firing practices led by Elmer Dixon and Curtiss Harris. The firing practices were conducted at Issaquah Gun Club. Close-order drills, led by Elmer Dixon, were held every Saturday during 1968 and into early 1969. At drill practice they were taught how to take a rifle apart, how to clean their weapons, and were admonished: "Don't spare the bullet."

Panthers, according to the witness, had dynamite, dynamite caps, nitroglycerin, and hand grenades in their possession. The witness reported seeing about 25 sticks of dynamite and dynamite caps in a closet at Aaron Dixon's house, and about six hand grenades in the apartment of another Panther leader.* In Panther headquarters, the witness claimed to have seen a case of dynamite and a bottle of liquid that looked like glue, which the Panthers stated was nitroglycerin. On one occasion a case of dynamite was ordered by a Panther member from an SDS member named Jerome Sherbon. Sherbon, however, was arrested by the police department before delivering the dynamite.⁵

The Seattle Black Panther Party was loosely organized into seven different units or sections as follows: (1) a robbery section; (2) a burglary section; (3) a striking force; (4) a women's section; (5) a section to harass merchants; (6) a section to harass the police department; and (7) a section to sell the Black Panther Party newspaper. The Panthers also arranged for a "representative" in school facilities to notify one of the Panther leaders* "when anything would happen, or they were going to make a robbery."

There was a policy on the part of Panthers in the Seattle Chapter to attempt to get younger people to commit robberies and burglaries. This was done on the theory that, if apprehended, a teenager would be taken to juvenile authorities and probably would not be sent to a penitentiary. The Panthers figured "that this child would take the rap for them and eventually the child would be released to the parents."

⁴ Pursuant to a duly authorized search warrant on July 7, 1969, a rifle alleged to be automatic was obtained from the apartment of Elmer Dixon. It was test fired by agents from the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division and determined to be an M-1, .30 caliber, semiautomatic Plainfield, serial number 15940. The weapon, a picture of which follows, was returned to Elmer Dixon on Aug. 18, 1969. The photograph was furnished to the committee by the Seattle Police Department.



⁵ Jerome Sherbon, born Oct. 21, 1944, was charged with the unlawful possession of explosives on Jan. 6, 1970, and was subsequently convicted. He received a 30-day suspended sentence and was assessed court costs. He has been identified by the Seattle Police Department as a member of SDS.

The witness claimed to be knowledgeable of five major robberies, five burglaries, and two attempted extortions of merchants, followed by arson, all of which were perpetrated by members of the Seattle Black Panther Party. Details related by the witness were either overheard as the members planned certain of these crimes or they subsequently discussed certain crimes after they were committed.

Four members of the Seattle Black Panther Party* robbed the Liberty Bank in Seattle.⁶ Panthers were unhappy with the bank because they wanted a bank run by Negroes and the manager of the Liberty Bank was Caucasian. Also, the bank had hired both black and white females. Between \$16,000 and \$18,000 was stolen from the bank, with one Panther member dropping \$2,000 as he fled the scene of the robbery. The witness testified that Willie Brazier, Lewis Jackson, and one other member* of the Seattle Black Panther Party robbed the Fidelity Bank in Seattle,⁷ taking approximately \$20,000.

Four members of the Seattle Black Panther Party* robbed the Imperial Lanes Bowling Alley in Seattle. The loss was \$2,000. Two of the four members also robbed the Safeway supermarket in Seattle.⁸ The witness said Buddy Yates and Artis Parker, members of the Seattle Black Panther Party, robbed the Market Basket in Seattle. The loss was placed at \$16,000.⁹

Members of the Seattle Panthers who committed robberies were expected to split the proceeds with one of the leaders* of the Seattle Chapter. Although the leader didn't take part in any of the robberies, he knew about every robbery committed. The percentage of the robbery proceeds he was to receive varied between 10 percent and 33 1/3 percent. The money was supposed to be used to finance the party. Some of the money was sent to national headquarters. The one member* previously mentioned, who was expelled from the party, was expelled because he refused to contribute 20 percent of certain proceeds from robberies he committed. Subsequent to his expulsion from the Panthers, he was employed as a youth counsellor at \$700 per month under a program partially funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Four members* of the Seattle Black Panther Party burglarized the Seattle Sporting Goods Store. It was burglarized at the direction of one of the Seattle Panther leaders* because the chapter needed guns and bullets. Two of the same four Black Panther Party members also burglarized Stan's Sporting Goods Store.¹⁰

In addition to the burglary where the television set was stolen, the witness spoke of two other burglaries of private residences committed by the members of the Seattle Black Panther Party. One was the burglary of a woman's home, committed by a 15-year-old Panther.*¹¹ All of the furniture was removed from the house. Some of the furniture was sold by the youth and two other members* of the Seattle Panthers. The remainder of the furniture was used in the house of one of the Seattle Panther leaders.*

A member* of the Seattle Panthers stole a refrigerator and gave it to the wife of another Seattle Panther.* In addition, the witness had seen personal property which had been stolen from homes in the Panthers' office. The witness stated, "I could have purchased a TV or stereo tapes and these [sic] sort of things."

The striking force and women's sections were to administer beatings when ordered. The witness claimed knowledge of five beatings administered by mem-

⁶ The records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that on Jan. 7, 1969, the Liberty Bank was robbed. Two of the Panther members identified by the witness were known to the police, but could not be arrested because available witnesses refused to aid in the prosecution.

⁷ Records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that the Fidelity Bank was robbed on Mar. 7, 1969. Willie Brazier and Lewis Jackson, two of the Panther members identified by the witness, were arrested and have been convicted. A third was a suspect in a police lineup, but not positively identified.

⁸ The records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that on Dec. 25, 1968, the Imperial Lanes Bowling Alley was robbed. The records also reflect that the Safeway supermarket was robbed on Dec. 21 and on Dec. 28, 1968. There have been no arrests in any of the three cases.

⁹ Records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that the Market Basket was robbed on Jan. 18, 1969. Buddy Yates and Artis Parker, two of the Panther members identified by the witness, were arrested and have been convicted.

¹⁰ Records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that the Seattle Sporting Goods Store was burglarized on Dec. 12, 1968. Two Panther members identified by the witness were arrested for carrying concealed weapons. The weapons were reported stolen from the Seattle Sporting Goods Store on December 12. Police records also reflect that Stan's Sporting Goods Store was burglarized on Mar. 24, 1969. There have been no arrests.

¹¹ Records of the Seattle Police Department reflect he was arrested, brought before the juvenile authorities, and placed on probation for this offense.

bers of the Seattle Panthers. A Panther member named Gerald Hatcher was allegedly beaten by the striking force because he wanted to get out of the Panthers. The witness saw another Seattle Panther beaten for the same reason by two members* of the Seattle Panthers, one of whom was a local leader.* Testimony disclosed that the same leader assaulted a boy who refused to contribute money to a collection being taken up for one of the Panthers who had been killed by a police officer.

The witness saw two members of the Seattle Panthers* beat a Caucasian girl, for no apparent reason, as she was leaving school. On another occasion the witness saw members of the women's section beat up a Caucasian woman going to a store with 52 cents to purchase milk for her child. The Panther women took the 52 cents from the woman, who was on welfare, but subsequently returned the money to her.

On several occasions, members of the Seattle Black Panther Party approached merchants in the Seattle area soliciting funds or merchandise. If the merchants refused to contribute, they would be harassed by the Panthers. If a merchant displayed a picture of a national Panther leader, for which the merchant paid a dollar, he would not be harassed by the Panthers.

On at least two occasions, according to the witness, members of the Panthers firebombed Seattle business establishments. The witness asserted one Panther member* firebombed a cleaning establishment¹² on 34th Avenue and Union because it refused to contribute. Four Panther members* firebombed a real estate agency,¹³ also on 34th and Union, because Panthers felt the Caucasian owners were selling real estate in a prejudicial manner. Panther members* also forced the Caucasian owners of The Beanery, a Seattle restaurant across the street from Franklin School, to sell out.

The merchants who were approached in a threatening or intimidating manner by Panther members usually were afraid to report the incidents to the police. If an arrest was made, according to the witness, the Panther member was back out on the street on bail before the officer submitted his report.

Panthers would call the police officers "cowboys" and "pigs" and throw rocks at their cars. The witness said the leader of that section "has been known to shoot at the police in their cars."¹⁴ During 1968 and early 1969 four members* of the Seattle Panthers sniped at police cars. Their expressed reason for the sniping was "to get rid of the pigs."

The Seattle Black Panther Party received newspapers each week from Oakland, Calif. The papers were sold on the streets on Fridays.

The witness has seen two of the Panther members,* one a local leader, smoke marijuana. Also observed was another Panther leader* taking pills known as "speed."

While still a member of the Panthers, the witness knew of at least one underground Panther.* He did some sniping at the home of a Seattle attorney. In the opinion of the witness, there were underground Panthers operating in Seattle at the time testimony was taken.

The Seattle Panthers, according to the testimony, had a basic and ultimate objective of revolution. To further that objective they were constantly attempting to obtain more money and more members. The various robberies and burglaries¹⁵ were to obtain operational funds as well as for personal gain. The breakfast program constituted one of their attempts to indoctrinate the young along the lines of thinking toward a revolution. The Seattle Panthers influenced the young members of the community; however, they didn't impress the older ones.

If a successful revolution should occur, the Panthers would replace the present form of government in the United States with a system comparable to Castro's in Cuba. Aaron Dixon explained what it would be like if they lived in Cuba: There would be no millionaires. The Panthers' idea is to take from the Establishment and "to give to the Negro people."

¹² The records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that the Cleaning Center, 34th Avenue and Union, was firebombed and burned on Apr. 6, 1968.

¹³ The records of the Seattle Police Department reflect that the Lake Washington Realty, 1400 34th Avenue, was firebombed and burned on June 25, 1968. It was also firebombed on Mar. 15, 1968, shortly before the Panther Party came into formal existence in Seattle.

¹⁴ See pp. 4304 and 4327 for the testimony of Sergeant Archie Porter and Detective Sergeant Fridell, both of the Seattle Police Department, for the facts concerning this incident and the disposition thereof.

¹⁵ The criminal activity described herewith by the witness was carried out by a dozen members of the Seattle Black Panther Party in the period from September 1968 through March 1969.