

COPY

COPY

COPY

COPY

COPY

EXCERPTS FROM SEATTLE CORRESPONDENCE ON BLACK PANTHER PARTY
(from Seattle Organizer)

LETTER OF JUNE 11, 1968

We had our scheduled meeting with the Black Panthers on Sat. It was quite informal (Tom, Wendy and myself attended) with their chairman and another gal, who is an officer, participating and three other representatives there part of the time. We were struck primarily by two things: their low level organizationally and politically (they are unfamiliar with the various political tendencies, etc.) and their seriousness. They wanted primarily practical suggestions and advice. They were interested in getting on the ballot, but totally unfamiliar with the requirements and, following the California lead, seeking a Peace and Freedom coalition. When I spoke with their chairman, Aaron Dixon, to set up the meeting, he asked about the PFP and, although he has dealt with us before, and I explained it to him over the phone, he was under some confusion that we were the Peace and Freedom Party when we arrived for the meeting.

We encouraged them to get on the ballot in their own name here. They are very interested in this. It is debatable for me whether they are well enough organized yet to pull it off -- especially since their members are involved in a number of legal cases -- although it seems quite clear that they would be able to get the 100 registered voters necessary. They are, at this time, very open to working with us and have been actively soliciting our help on printing problems, books, fund-raising ideas, etc.

We brought up the idea of defense work for the 2 cases now pending here (one is unlawful assembly for the Franklin H.S. sit-in; the other is arson for the MLK week-end events -- each of which involves 5 black youth) and also for Huey's case and, although they are interested, they have little thought on how to go about it.

The Black Panthers here have considerable potential. Their organization -- such as it is -- has overlapping membership with SNCC and the BSU. It is almost to a man and woman young, with many H.S. youth active.

The B.S.U. won a significant victory at the UW recently. Two of their key members were put on \$300 a month salary as advisors to the Black Studies Dept. being created. One of their first moves was to call us for book prices which they say they are asking the UW to order (with UW money) through us. They also have 10 "recruiters" for black and Indian and Mexican-American students being put on staff by the UW. There is still dickering over the salaries for these.

* * *

LETTER OF JUNE 24, 1968

A brief note on the BPP situation here in light of the discussion in the Bay Area. Our relationship with them continues to improve; we are exchanging literature, assisting them with printing techniques and are in frequent communication. They are expressing increased interest in running candidates locally -- they are planning 2, not just 1, now -- and have stated they want to cooperate with us on this. They would base their campaign on the 10 point program of the Oakland BPP. The leadership that we have come in contact with -- about 15 different youth -- are very healthy and do not seem generally prone to ultra-leftism. Because of this, we will naturally be very interested in our Bay Area attitude toward the BPP campaign. The BP youth here think of it as a BP more than PFP campaign and our position there will, naturally, have repercussions here. We have told the Seattle BPP that, if they run on their own, independently, based on the 10-pt. program, we would support them. They have read our campaign material and express no disagreement. They have opened a small attractive storefront with regular hours from 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM. At this time they sell mainly posters, buttons and a couple of newspapers. They had the Militant with their others -- the one copy I had mailed them on France -- and I think will be willing to take a small bundle regularly. They are apparently unaware of any friction the SWP might have with BPP in the Bay Area and, at this time, we undisputedly have the best relationship of any white organization with them. We have noticed that most BPP youth seem to come from the relatively better-heeled layer in the black community. They also get around the country a great deal one way or another. The captain has just returned from a BSU conference in N.Y.C.; 2 other leaders are in New Orleans on a trip; they make it up and down the coast, etc.

Our main orientation toward them, now, is to maintain good relations, devote time to helping them with practical problems, influencing them politically especially regarding defense work for their victims and continuing discussions on the election campaign. We are pushing them as much as we can to declare 1 or 2 candidates as soon as possible. They have the manpower, enthusiasm and resources -- they are trying to put their organization together and chart a political direction and seem to feel overwhelmed by all the things that are necessary to do.

* * *