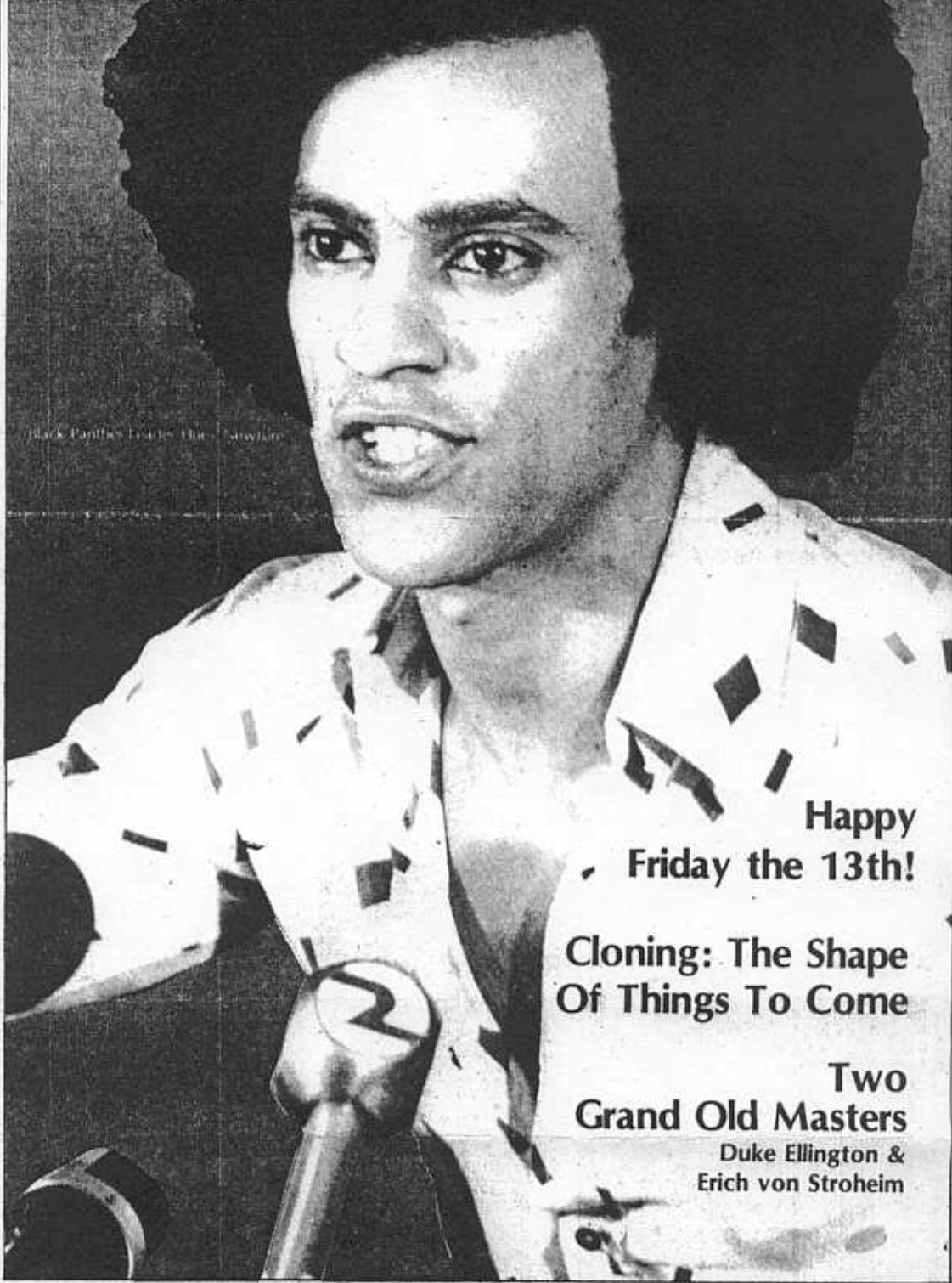


# IS LEFT DESERTING PANTHERS?

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Black Panther Leader Huey P. Newton

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# Bay Area Left Backs Away From Black Panther Party



of the Party, have given new life to a variety of old charges against the Panthers. Specifically, the Panthers have been accused of engaging in an official campaign of extortion against Oakland merchants in order to raise funds for Party activities.

Perhaps the worst blow to the Panther's faltering alliance with local leftists, however, came when former Party Chairperson Elaine Brown withdrew from the party. Brown had worked long and hard to involve the Panthers in local electoral politics from the time she took over stewardship of the Party in 1974. Her resignation was seen by many local left activists as evidence of a power struggle within the group, and a possible de-emphasis of mainstream political activity for the Party.

Local politicians deny that their cautious attitude toward the Party amounts to a cooling of relations. Supervisor John George told the Barb, "I just want to know what the facts are. I don't know what the outcome of the investigations (into Panther Party activities) are going to be, but I'm hoping that they will prove these allegations false."

But George admitted that he had not gone out of his way to learn the Party's explanation of the charges. "They haven't been in contact with me," George said, "and I haven't been in contact with them."

The Barb was unable to contact Mayor Wilson for comment on his hasty resignation from the board of the Panther's Oakland Community School, but his administrative assistant, Tony Adams, denied that it had anything to do with the Party's bad publicity.

"The Mayor is chairman of the Oakland Manpower board," Adams explained, "and the Educational Opportunity/Corporation (which operates the Panther school) had received two grants from the Manpower board. The Mayor resigned from the Corporation's board because of the conflict of interest. He couldn't sit on the board of a group that was receiving public funds."

As for the flap over the Dellums affidavit on Newton's behalf, Dellums' administrative assistant Donald Hopkins told the Barb there was nothing to it: "There was no controversy (within the Dellums' camp) about the affidavits whatsoever."

"There have been some uneasy feelings (about the bad publicity surrounding the Panthers)," Hopkins said, "because those of us who have worked closely with the Party have come to really appreciate the contributions of individuals such as Elaine Brown, and we are saddened by the loss of these individuals. Secondly, we're reading the papers like everyone else, but I think that we're exercising the presumption of innocence until guilt is proven."

Nevertheless, other informed sources have said that Dellums and his staff are downplaying their connection to the Panthers in the wake of the most recent ac-



Congressman Ron Dellums

cusations against the Party. "Ron isn't going out of his way to help them," one source told the Barb with a shrug.

The Black Panthers themselves have said that the widely publicized charges against them are the result of a local COINTELPRO-style "disinformation" campaign. According to Party spokesperson Mike Fultz, "the vicious allegations circulated by local law enforcement agencies, and undoubtedly federal police agencies, are a malicious and hysterical attempt to ... disrupt, discredit and destroy our people's organization and sever the model programs serving the community here in Oakland and elsewhere in the nation."

Fultz claims that the "spectacular stories of murder and mayhem have played an essential role in the 'dirty tricks' against us ... Divide and conquer is a familiar ploy. Certainly that is what the FBI and the police are doing now."

by Bill Wallace

**F**ollowing a widely publicized spate of accusations against the Black Panther Party by Bay Area police, local left politicians who have worked closely with the Panthers in the past appear to be cooling toward the organization. It seems that the organized left in the East Bay -- and particularly elected office-holders -- are drawing back from the party in the wake of its bad publicity.

Item: Lionel Wilson, who last year was elected Mayor of Oakland with substantial Panther aid, withdrew from his position as a member of the board of directors of the Panthers' Oakland Community School following accusations that the school had misused public funds. Although Wilson was earlier rumored to be considering placing some Party officials on city

boards and commissions following his victory, no major appointment has materialized.

Item: In recent interviews with media representatives, Alameda County Supervisor John George has said he has some "serious questions" about the Panthers in the wake of recent allegations. George, who like Wilson was elected with the strong support of the Panthers, has said he is taking a cautious "wait and see" attitude toward the Party until the charges against it are resolved.

Item: When Congressman Ron Dellums (Dem., Berkeley) filed an affidavit late last year attesting to his belief that Panther leader Huey P. Newton was a good bail risk, the action reportedly concerned and worried some of Dellums staffers and supporters from the northern end of his district. Inside sources say that the affidavit may be used by conservatives seeking to oust Dellums in the next election, and argue that Black Panther electoral support for Dellums probably isn't worth the risk.

In short, as one local left activist told the Barb, "I think it's fair to say that people on the left have been keeping them (the Panthers) at arm's length."

The apparent cooling of East Bay progressives toward the Panthers seems to stem from recent press reports linking some members of the Party to a variety of illegal and unethical activities, including extortion, murder and conspiracy. Significantly, the allegations of wrongdoing have come primarily from local law enforcement sources, and have been promoted strongly by the Oakland Tribune newspaper.

The Tribune has been propagandizing against the Panthers since the Party's formation in the Sixties, and the paper's recent sale to a southwestern media conglomerate doesn't seem to have significantly influenced its editorial line on the group.

A recent shooting incident in Richmond and a bungled assassination in Nevada, both allegedly linked to members

Dellums and his staff are downplaying their connection to the Panthers in the wake of the most recent accusations.

"Ron isn't going out of his way to help them," one source told the Barb.



Newton at a press conference with former Party Chairperson Elaine Brown.