900 criminal cases may never be tried

Crane blames Swisher's 'incompetence'

By Gordon W. Crane
AFRO Staff Writer

COMMENTARY

Steve Sachs, Maryland's new attorney general, has been asked to snatch William Swisher's proverbial chestnuts out of the fire.

While we harbor no ill will against Steve—who is a decent and competent attorney general—the sad thing here is that he will not be able to pull it off. And that will be poetic justice. Not for Sachs, but for Swisher.

Sachs has asked the Maryland Court of Appeals to modify its ruling, mandating that all persons accused of crimes be tried within 120 days after indictment, or be released.

Because of the incompetence of Swisher and his ragged band of assistants, including deputy state's attorney, Mary Ann Willin, more than 900 criminal cases—including 200 serious felonies—maybe thrown out of court.

Six such cases, including murder, rape, and robbery, have already been dismissed because they were not brought to trial within the 120-day limit.

Sachs hope to get the Appeals Court to relax its mandate in order to avoid the wholesale freeing of accused criminals, who have already demonstrated that they cannot function among decent people.

Meanwhile, in typical fashion, Swisher has announced that he will reindict those defendants who may be freed through his own negligence, or incompetence, or both.

A survey of leading criminal and constitutional lawyers, however, suggest that this will be no more than another case of blowing in the wind.

The attorneys, including Barbara Mello of the American Civil Liberties Union, agree that re-indictment would "raise some serious constitutional questions."

Billy Murphy, who makes it a habit of grinding up Swisher's prosecutors in criminal trials, says re-indictments "are nothing more than a sceheme to circumvent the Appeals Court decree and that, in itself, is unconstitutional."

Kenneth Thompson, who assisted George L. Russell Jr. in reducing state prosecutors to babbling legal neophytes in the celebrated trial of Police Col. James Watkins, doesn't think Swisher's re-indictment plan has "a prayer of a chance" when it is challenged in the appeals courts, which it is destined to be.

The prospect of hundreds of people being turned loosed to commit more crimes—principally against blacks—is, of course, disturbing.

Thus the larger question is: "Just how did the State's Attorney for Baltimore City manage to get the key link in the criminal justice chain in such an unholly mess?"

The answer is simple. Incompetence. With a liberal mixture of stupidity.

For the last four years, Swisher has devoted his time to seeking re-election and verbally sparring with federal prosecutors who were probing corruption in his office.

Ironically, Swisher tried to persuade a federal judge to delay his trial until next January. The bottom line to that effort is, however, the city prosecutor must take his place in the defendant's dock in September.

In any case, while Swisher was wheeling and dealing to insure his re-election, while keeping a backward glance on brigade of federal probers, deputy Willin was running the office.

Since she made it her personal mission to "get Watkins" at any cost—in time, money, questionable tactics and manpower—the outcome of the Watkins trial tells us something about how effective she was at running the office.

Late last year, Alan H. Murrell, Maryland's chief public defender, tipped us off to what was going on in the state's attorney's office, but few chose to listen.

While Swisher was boasting that his assistants were racking up a 98 per cent conviction rate for serious crimes, Murrell said publicly that he was not surprised.

"What else can you expect when they (state prosecutors) dropped more than 50 per cent of the cases; plea bargained a majority of the rest, and only tried cases they were sure of winning," Murrell said.

And many of those "sure winners" wound up being botched up by Swisher's men, according to several defense lawyers, who contend that second year law students would have no problem "blowing state prosecutors out of the ball game."

Now Swisher is talking about "selective prosecution" to cope with the 120-day limit.

There is abundant evidence that that's exactly what Swisher and his assistants have been doing all along — trying the easy cases, plea bargain or delay bringing the more difficult ones to court.

The irony of all of this is the fact that the man who campaigned as a "tough guy" who was going to "tame the jungle" proves to be nothing more than another incompetent bureaucrat feasting on the public payroll.

This would be nothing more than comic relief, were it not for the fact that present and future victims of crime can hope for no improvement until there are some changes in the state's attorney office.

In one man's humble judgment, that can't be too soon.

Swisher aide Mary Ann Willin: moving 'as fast as we can'

Deputy State's Attorney Mary Ann Willin stated that the state's attorney office is now moving cases in Criminal Court "as fast as we can" without regard to police, witnesses and lawyers having adequate notice.

The Courts of Appeals recently ruled that a trial must be scheduled to begin within 120 days of the defendant's arraignment or from the time his lawyer makes an initial appearance on his behalf.

Otherwise, the court said, the charges must be dismissed unless the delay was for extraordinary cause.

According to Neil Ruther, an assistant state's attorney, there are 910 defendants now awaiting trial in Criminal Court. Rather could not say if the court's administrative Judge Robert Karwacki would allow the other judges on the Supreme Bench to forego their regular non-criminal courtroom assignments to preside over the backlog of criminal case.

At AFRO presstime, Judge Karwacki was not available for comment.

However, the attorney general's office will file a motion today (Friday) asking the state's highest court to reconsider its opinion on the 120-day trial rule.

Baltimore County administrative Judge John N. Maguire said the criminal caseload in the county is so heavy and judges will be diverted for a while.

Each county court in the state has been reacting to the Court of Appeals' June 25 ruling. The immediate effect of the ruling was dismissal of three criminal case in Baltimore County, including murder charges against an Ellicott City man accused of killing a Woodlawn man.

more judges have to be assigned to criminal cases, so some civil

Advance Federal offers higher savings interest rate

Advance Federal Savings and Loan Association is now offering regular passbook savers 5.50 percent dividends.

The increase was approved by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, which supervises Advance and all other federal thrift institutions.

In addition, Advance now has available the new four - year certificate, enabling depositors of $500 minimum to earn 7.85 percent. Also approved by the Federal Home Loan board, this high - yielding certificate was established to give small depositors a better return on their savings.

The 7.85 percent yield on the four - year certificate will apply through July 31. The rate is based on the average yield on four - year U.S. Treasury notes.

Also available at Advance are the Money Market certificates, whose rate is based on the weekly Treasury bill rate. Minimum deposit for Money Market is $10,000, and dividends are computed on a six - month or 182 - day basis.

Federal regulations require substantial penalty for early withdrawal on the new four - year certifcate, the Money Market and other higher rate certificates, which are also available at Advance. Also prohibited by federal regulation is compounding of interest during the term of the Money Mart certificate.

Dr. W. O. Bryson Jr, Advance Federal president, said the new 5.50 percent rate on regular passbook accounts and the new four - year certificate, which enables savers to earn more than they can on existing six to eight year certificates, should be a real incentive.

He said, Advance has made more than $1 million in new mortgage loans so far this year.

As of May 31, 1979, Advance Federal's assets climbed to more than $24 million, another record. Savings accounts exceed $19 million for the same period, another record - breaker.

Another passbook savings account available at Advance is the 90 - day notice, paying dividends of 5.75 percent, provided the deposits remain for at least 90 days. Dividends are compounded quarterly and withdrawals may be made without penalty at the end of any dividend period.

Advance is the only black - owned federal savings and loan firm in the state of Maryland. It was ranked ninth in the list of 40 top minority - owned thrift associations in a recent issue of "Black Enterprise."

Advance offices are located at 1405 E. Cold Spring Lane, and at 1411 W. North Ave.

Rawlings joins the campaign to bring rent control to city

Del. Howard "Pete" Rawlings D-40 has joined the fight to bring rent control to Baltimore.

The freshman delegate announced Wednesday that he will lead a drive to secure signatures of the registered voters in his district.

"The signatures are needed in order to have a rent control question placed on the November ballot," he said. "Reservoir Hill is one of the areas of my district where tenants are being forced out by high rent increases. This has a great impact on the stability of the family in economic terms."

Hopefully, this undertaking will result in property owners not being at liberty to engage in exorbitant rent increases and at the same time allow tenants to maintain their residency in areas of the city they have chosen to become a part of," he added.

The drive to have rent control put on the November ballot was launched last week by the Coalition for Rent Control which is made up of about 30 community organizations.

Already Mayor William Donald Schaefer has come out against rent control stating it was not feasible for the city.

Rawlings said he plans to concentrate his efforts in securing signatures at key locations throughout his district which will include door to door canvassing.

The Automobile Club of Maryland is providing daily information on gasoline availability nationwide via tape-recorded information on 728-0605 in the metropolitan Baltimore area.

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CDAO endorses Mitchell, Adams, Douglass—Tie vote on Mfume, Welch

Members of the Citizens Democratic Action Organization (CDAO) are not sure who they want to endorse for the third slot in the 4th councilmanic district race.

The organization, headed by Delegate Larry Young, D.-38, Tuesday unanimously endorsed incumbents Michael Mitchell and Victorine Adams, but was tied on whether to endorse Kwelsi Mfume or Agnes Welch for the third slot.

Rather than violate a ruling that the executive director or chairman of the Board of Directors (Young) and the CDAO president, Ruth Kirk could not vote, the membership established a political action committee to meet with Mfume and Mrs. Welch and then make a recommendation to the board of directors with the board acting on the recommendation.

The final selection is expected to be made Monday, July 16.

The endorsement of the two city council candidates followed CDAO's endorsement of Delegate John Douglass, D-46, for the candidacy of comptroller.

"John Douglass epitomizes the best in public servants," said Young. "He deserves the support of the entire populace. I will not only contribute money and volunteer canvassing, but full election day coverage from the 38th Legislative District."

Douglass has already received the endorsement of the Fourth District Democratic organization and is expected to receive the endorsements of the People's Democratic Action Organization (PDAO).

PDAO is expected to make its endorsements on Tuesday and sources said the organization is likely to go with Mitchell, Mrs. Adams and Mfume.

The Metro Democratic Political Organization has not made its endorsement as yet but is also expected to back Mitchell and Mrs. Adams and endorse Mary B. Adams for the third slot.

The Automobile Club of Maryland warns motorists against storing an extra can of gasoline in their car trunks as a dangerous practice.

A standard transmission can give you up to 10 percent better mileage. Consider this when shopping for a new car.

GO FISH — James Bryant, 13 and Olethia Hughes, 13, play cards at the playground at Druid Hill Avenue and Baker Street while Brian Jackson, 13, watches (L to R).

AFRO Photo by Roman Hankewyez

Provident Hospital receives dental grant

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently announced that Provident Hospital Inc., has been awarded a $343,585 grant. Provident is one of 34 community hospitals awarded a grant to strengthen their existing dental services.

Foundation president, David E. Rogers, M.D., said, "In any given year, 90 percent of Americans require treatment for tooth decay or gum disease, yet only one - third receive treatment, and two - thirds of poor children never receive dental care . . ."

Dr. Rogers continued, "Provident's grant is an attempt to demonstrate that hospitals can stand as front - line providers in dental services for people who are unable to find or get dental care anywhere else."

This program will reach many patients who currently are not receiving adequate dental services.

The Provident Hospital dentistry program will build on the recent growth of dentists working in hospitals while they seek advanced training in the hospitals' based residency program. The resident dentist will be available to staff expanded dental services.

The Chief of Dentistry at Provident Hospital Inc. is Irving Hawkins, M.D. and Project Director is Dr. Lawton Pierre. Dr. Hawkins commented, "Of the 73 census tracts in our catchment area, 36 have been designated as dental manpower shortage areas with an average ratio of 7,000 in the population to each dentist."

The Provident Hospital Dental Department is hospital - based, having access to diversified Medical Support Services, that provide dental care to a patient population unable to receive care in most dental facilities and offices.

Provident was selected from among 160 hospitals that had existing dental services and a residency training program. Provident Hospital is one of the nation's oldest, black non - profit health care institutions, recently celebrating 85 years of service to the Baltimore community. The president of the 271 bed institution is Thomas W. Chapman.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the nation's largest health philanthropy awarding nearly 319 million in grants since receiving the bequest of the late General Robert Wood Johnson in 1971.

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Youth, 15, missing for four weeks

Christopher High came home from school on June 19 and did his usual household chores.

He asked his mother, Nora High, if he could go outside with his friends and she said yes, but told him to be back in the house by 11:15 p.m.

Mrs. High hasn't seen her son since then. He never came back home.

The last day Christopher was seen at his Edmondson Village home in the 4500 block Manorview Road, he was wearing a white long sleeve shirt, white pants, off-white woven rope sandals and a silver digital watch.

Christopher High

The brown-skinned 15-year-old youth who stands 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighs 130 pounds and has short black hair, brown eyes and a mustache.

Mrs. High reports that the disappearance is unusual for Christopher but believes that he away from home because of family problems.

"He's good student and get good grades," said Mrs. High "He's never done anything like this before." Her son, who graduated from West Baltimore Middle School, is scheduled to attend Edmondson Senior High this fall.

Mrs. High stated that although her son didn't reveal any problems to her, he did confide in neighbors and friends with whom she is talking in hopes of finding her son.

If anyone has any information about his whereabouts, call Nora High at 362-8171 or 367-9926 or call the police department.

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Hot weather dieting tips

Simmer or slimmer?

Simmer through the summer or slimmer through the summer?

If you follow these tips from Helen Fleischer, area director of Diet Workshop, you may end the summer looking for a fall wardrobe in a smaller size.

1. Plan lots of outdoor barbecues. There's no better way of wringing excess fat from meat than letting it drip over the charcoal.
2. Have pitchers of iced tea at the ready, with lemon and artificial sweetener.
3. Exercise a little every day. If the weather is truly hot, walk early in the morning or have an afternoon swim.
4. Eat salads, but ignore regular dressings. Buy a supply of bottled diet dressings — one for each day of the week.
5. Make the most of fruits in season. In their own juices, they require no sugar at all if you buy them fully ripe.
6. Go fishing. No better diet protein exists than fresh fish.
7. On vacation? Don't eat bread or potatoes when dining out. Keep your selections to meat or fish, vegetable and salad. Fruit for dessert or ice milk.

The heat of summer won't last forever, but the eat of summer can linger for months in the form of unwanted fat.

For summer recipes send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: The Diet Workshop, Box 279, Reisterstown, Md. 21136.

Head Start sponsoring Health Fair

The Baltimore City Head Start Program and the East Baltimore Medical Plan are co-sponsoring a Health Fair on Friday, July 27, at 1031 N. Asiquith St., from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Health Fair will focus on early identification' preventive health care, health education and community health resources.

Exhibits, literature, demonstrations and screenings will be avalable. There will also be door prizes and surprise attractions.

All are invited to participate. For more information contact: Mildred P. Baughan, Head Start, 396-1705 or Dr. Bernard Branson, East Baltimore Medical Plan, 327-0085.

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