City planning chief branded 'deplorable' landlord

(Continued from page 1)

The Rev. Ronnie Lee Fleming a tenant at Colson-owned property at 1306 Wilcox St. brought his landlord a present: two big rubber rats.

"I speak for the people. Rats have terrified me from when I was a kid to manhood. You can have them," he said.

Members of the audience agreed.

"Give him (Colson) the rats — there are plenty more where those came from!"

Ms. Howard delivered a parting shot

"If you have a conscience I hope you don't sleep a wink tonight," she said.

Colson whose deadpan expression never altered during the barrage said the gathering was adjourned and without any comment left the conference room for a smaller adjoining room until the tenants and rent control people left.

Ms. Howard told the AFRO after the meeting that her organization will continue to push for his resignation and apply pressure on city officials.

"People can't live like this," she said.

Another person to speak out to Colson was Antonio Howard who lives with his mother Ms. Mary Gibbs and nine other people including five children at 710 E. 21st St. which is owned by Marilyn Colson.

On Wednesday April 2 Ms. Gibbs opened her house to reporters and photographers as testimony to charges that Colsons houses are as rent control advocates claim "deplorable."

The press toured the three-story dwelling and saw rat holes plugged with plastic orange drink bottles a wobbly floor under a bathroom sink on the verge of collapse clogged plumbing large damp spots on a bedroom ceiling where the roof leaks, gaping holes in walls and broken windows.

And although Ms. Gibbs has a month-to-month agreement but not a lease she is threatened with eviction by April 7 because she received a $268 water bill. Under the agreement with Colson she is responsible for all utilities.

A few blocks away on East 23rd Street Ms. Josephine Autry a female friend and two children also live in a house owned by Colson.

She complained about a rat problem so severe that all her food must be stored in the refrigerator a broken furnace and an electric light switch which shoots sparks when flipped on or off.

Ms. Autry said she has repaired as many of the problems as she can manage because Colson said he would evict her if she complained about the house.

"That man wont do s— t point blank" she said.

The rent for both houses has increased since the families moved in. Ms. Gibbs now pays $168.50 per month and Ms. Autry pays $157.50.

Tenants efforts to contact Colson usually dead end with his secretary who tells them he is in a meeting or at lunch they said.

Ms. Autry and Ms. Gibbs said they tried several times unsuccessfully to get a housing inspector to visit their respective houses.

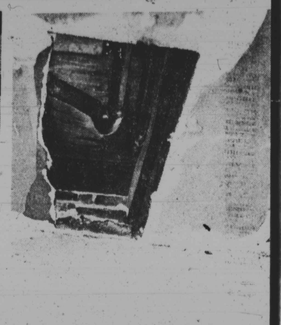
Rent control advocates began checking Colsons property after he was named acting chairman of the Planning Commission.

They also sent a letter to Mayor William Donald Schaefer saying they disapproved of Colson selection to the commission because he "demonstrates a callous lack of sensitivity to the wishes and needs of the majority of city residents."

Schaefer's written response cited Colsons "professional experience and qualifications."

Rent control supporters find those qualifications questionable. Colson's "distinguished background" (to quote Schaefer's letter) include: president of the board of directors of the PropertysOwners Association of Baltimore City, membership on the commission studying the vacant housing problem in Baltimore, membership on the Real Estate Board of Greater Baltimore and consultant to the Governors Commission that wrote a state housing code.

NEEDS WORK — The Rev. Ronnie Lee Fleming rents this house in the 1300 block Wilcox St. This photo shows the condition of the walls.



Pro-rent control forces also charge Colson as treasurer of the anti-rent control committee used "dirty tricks" to dissuade city residents from voting for rent control.

One tactic they say he used was to send out bogus official-looking tax bills which predicted property tax rates would markedly increase if rent control became law in Baltimore.

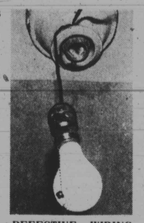
Rent control backers and tenants will continue to fight for Colson's resignation on the Planning Commission and repairs on the houses he owns.

While they work on that Colsons tenants have a suggestion to expedite both.

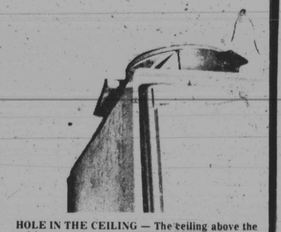
"Let him come out and stay in my house for one week and see how he likes it" said Ms. Autry.

"He wouldn't last one night when the rats come out" said Antonio Howard.

The AFRO contacted Colson at his Charles Center South office Wednesday April 2. He said he had "No comment" to questions.



DEFECTIVE WIRING — A lightbulb dangles from a cord below the ceiling fixture in the house at 1306 Wilcox St.



HOLE IN THE CEILING — The ceiling above the refrigerator in the houwe owned by Marilyn Colson, wife of the acting chairman of the city Planning Commission, is in need of repair. Four people live in this house in the 1300 block Wilcox St. Rent is $119 per month.

Judges, challengers in political free-for-all

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writer

Four of the sitting judges currently running for election to fifteen year terms were transformed into tough-talking politicians at a special NAACP meeting held Tuesday March 25 at St. Johns AME Church located near the corner of Lafayette Ave. and Carrollton.

The meeting featured sitting judges Elsbeth Bothe Robert Bell M. Albert Figinski and Joseph Pines. Two black candidates for Supreme Bench judgeships attorneys Alonzo Hairston and William "Billy" Murphy were also present. The meeting featured a forum entitled "Is There Justice for Blacks in the Criminal Justice System?" which was moderated by Attorney Herbert L. Singleton and which soon degenerated into a noisy political and racial brawl.

Enonia McMillan head of the Baltimore branch of the NAACP opened the meeting by calling for an increase in the number of black registered voters while in the back of the room a group sat waiting to register all who were willing.

Rev. Douglass Miles head of the politically active Brown Memorial Baptist Church and the NAACPs Political Action Committee spoke next and also called for increased voter registration and participation.

"As we move into the Eighties" intoned the minister. "It is imperative that we come together as a political force."

Tommie Jackson a young member of the NAACP gave a brief message on the importance of participating in the Census then Herb Singleton rose to introduce the speakers for the forum.

"Not only are we being asked to elect individuals" he said. "But we are also being asked to evaluate the system!"

After addressing the problem of the high rate of incarceration suffered by blacks in the state he turned the microphone over to Judge Robert Bell.

"Theoretically Bell stated The system we operate under can and does evaluate every citizen who comes before it. Practically there are problems with the system. But the people who operate the system are just that people so there are going to be instances of injustices. The clear-cut answer to seeing that all persons receive a fair trial is that persons who run the system are conscientious dedicated persons.

When "When one looks diligently for those who will administer the law fairly we will have a better system." Bell emphasized the human factor involved in the judicial system as he closed his presentation by stating "You cannot judge the system apart from those who operate within its confines."

Judge Elsbeth Bothe began her speech by recounting her experiences with the NAACP which she said began in 1945.

She stated that one impression she recalls from her days as a civil rights lawyer in Mississippi was "the importance of having judges who were not subject to the popular will of the people."

Describing the judges she faced in the South she said "They could not exhibit their decency because they were subject to the will of the people who elected them. The judges sat there with their shotguns and cokes with their feet on the desks and their idea of justice was what the Klan perceived as justice."

She stated that her experiences left her with the conviction that judges should not be elected.

"I know this" she said. "Because if the judge on the Supreme Bench of Mississippi who heard one of my cases had been elected instead of appointed I might have been dis-barred."

She closed her oration with a plea to the crowd more than 100 to re-elect the sitting judges to ensure "justice for all."

"I came not to campaign but to address the issue" stated M. Albert Figinski as he took the mike. He proceeded to relate his experiences as a member of United State Senates subcommittee on judicial improvement which wrote the Federal Jury Selection Act of 1968.

"Before the Act was passed clerks in the federal judges would call up friends of theirs and their friends would put together lists of possible jurors who were usually selected. No blacks were on these jurors and few people with names which ended in ki like mine." he said.

He stated that the resultant law was the model for Marylands jury selection process.

Figinski then recounted the story of a 67-year-old black man who had been accused by a younger white man of assault. He described how upon talking with the lawyers in the case (Figinski was a district court judge before receiving a Supreme Bench appointment)

he found that the black man had been provoked into stabbing the white man.

"The jury came back with a not guilty verdict" he said. "That shows the system does work. This would not have been the case if the key man system was still in operation."

Alonzo Hairston was next to speak. He handed out a 14-page statement addressing the issue being discussed at the forum then proceeded to read from it.

The statement pointed out that "the component of the criminal justice system with whom most people are familiar is the police."

He described the discretionary powers the police had in determining whether or not to arrest individuals and concluded from his text that the rate of blacks is substantially higher than that of whites.

Hairston then issued an endorsement of Bell Murphy and himself and closed his presentation by stating that there is no justice for blacks within the criminal justice system. He said that the election of more black judges would be a major step in correcting flaws within the state judicial system.

"White folks tickle me" said William Murphy as he took the floor. "You know the way they deal with us. They look at poor blacks and call us shiftless or lazy; they talk about self-help but when we talk about self-help at the polls by electing black judges they cry racism in reverse!"

The audience began murmuring in agreement as he continued. "The chance is now to increase the number of black judges. Thats why I support Bell Hairston and myself. Thats why I cannot endorse any of the other people seated up here with me. We shouldnt ask white people to help us."

Murphy slammed Figinski for his remarks concerning the 67-year-old defendant and Bothes recollections of her experiences as an NAACP lawyer labelling them both as patronizing remarks to the predominantly black audience.

"Is this racism?" he asked rhetorically. "No. Everybody up here is qualified to be a judge. They all have the ability to do a decent creditable job. The question is who is best suited to change the system to make it work for us?"

Murphy charged that the white candidates would not carry Bell.

Herbert Singleton then rose and urged the audience to participate in the following question-and-answer period. "These individuals will sit on the bench for fifteen years. You wont have another chance to get them."

Earl Koger area editor and civil rights figure was the first to be recognized from the audience. He deplored the inclusion of the race issue and stated "why not vote on the basis of their records not on the basis of race." Dont be stupid and select people just because theyre black."

The primary concern of most of the audience members appeared to be the high rate of black incarcerations.

Ameen Rasheed a local corrections officer stated that since so many of todays black men are behind bars youth commit crimes "to go where the men are."

Elsbeth Bothe also turned politician as she responded to a question from a man in the audience who asked "How can we turn this system around?"

She described the case of a man who had been charged with escape and how he non-support.

"The judge who did that to him" she said taking a swipe at Murphy "Was Judge Milton B. Allen. The problem cannot be cured by electing more black judges."

One young woman in the audience expressed her disgust with the entire proceedings when she asked Is it a mistake to turn our judges into politicians?"

As most of the judges with the exception of Bell began to leave to attend a Republican party function already scheduled Bell answered her query.

He stated that he was uncomfortable in the position of a politician but added that the major plus in the campaign process was that it "sensitizes judges."

He then added a humouous note. "They should either change the rules or restrict the of functions a judge must attend and I would b in favor of the latter."

The meeting closed with another speech by Singleton attacking the prison issue as a "racial issue."

Both Murphy and Hairston who by the close of the meeting were the on y panelists left took the opportunity to make additional campaign pitches to the departing audience. — 30— to make it work for us?"

Murphy charged that the white candidates would not carry Bell on their ticket in the white communities and cited Judge Milton B. Allens defeat in the 1975 states attorney race. He stated that when Allen won the job in 1971 he did not campaign in the white community but received 8 percent of votes from whites. But in 1975 when Allen did campaign in white neighborhoods he only received three percent of the vote.

"We have accepted white candidates from the president on down but I am terrified to go into white communities and let them find out the Murphy on the ballot is black!"

He slammed Bothes statement that she was not in favor of electing judges and stated "Why should we eliminate the Judge Howard Hargroves and Murphs (all references to judges who won their seats in past elections past).

"Is there justice for blacks in the criminal justice system?" he asked. "Occasionally."

Judge Joseph Pines was the last speaker and he was quick to cite his activities on behalf of civil rights. He described how as past head of the Baltimore Urban League he and several blacks established a program through which an unprecedented number of blacks were able to join local trade unions.

Speaking to the issue at hand Pines stated "There is no black justice no white justice there is only justice."

Pines stated that most offenders who come before him are people who have decided that they are not a part of the system and have no control over their lives.

"They dont have a sense of belonging in this system they dont feel they can make a difference. When a person comes before me I try to impress upon him that here is a judge who wants him to be a part of the system. Im trying to make people who come before me realize that they are worth something as opposed to just sending them out to be warehoused.

Pines also described how he monitors the progress of defendants he encounters to the point of urging them to get G.E.D. or trade education.

He then slashed Murphy for his comments on the upcoming election.

"None of these people up here be said looking directly at Murphy is using this election as a stepping-stone to the mayoralty. Dont be taken in by the black issue. You ought to be sophisticated enough to know the difference. Were not running on issues that divide!"

He resumed his seat to a mounting chorus of boos and catcalls.

DRAMATIC HISTORY PRESENTATION — Members of "Baltimore Voices" dramatize the city's history at a presentation at City Hall this week. In the photo at left, Kathy Crawford and Bill Craig relate stories from early Baltimore, then join other cast members Sandra MacKenzie, Barry Meiners, Helen Scalsiya and David Watkins (photo at right). "Baltimore Voices" is the theater group which uses oral histories

AFRO photos by Mark Gail

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$65,000 insult

Jury rules broadcaster's 'joke' not funny

By Pam Widgeon
AFRO Staff Writer

Dennis P. Holly, former anchorman for WMAR-TV was awarded a total of $65,000 April 10 after the jury reached a verdict in his favor.

Holly, who showed no emotions when the verdict was returned filed a $2 million slander suit against WFBR disc jockey, Johnny Walker and the radio station March 6, 1979 after Walker stated on the radio that Holly injured his knee when he fell while lugging a color television set during the looting.

After deliberating for three hours, the jury verdict was $25,000 compensatory against WFBR and Johnny Walker, whose real name is James Embry, $5,000 punitive against Walker and $35,000 punitive against WFBR. Following testimony in the two week trial, Holly's attorney, Marvin Ellin asked the jury in his closing argument, "Is there any doubt in your mind that Susan White-Bowden hates this man (Dennis Holly) and her husband Jack Bowden doesn't have any great love for him?"

Mrs. White - Bowden a reporter for WMAR-TV was the first person to tell Holly about the remark she heard on the radio accusing him of looting. She testified that she considered the remark humorous.

She told the jury after telling Holly what she heard, he said, "Maybe I will make some money out of this." In a pretrial deposition, Mrs. Bowden described Holly as "a cold, arrogant and unfriendly person."

Her husband, Jack Bowden, who is also a reporter for WMAR-TV testified that he laughed when he heard Walker's remark.

Holly told the jury Wednesday, "I did not ever say anything resembling her (Mrs. White - Bowden's) statement about making money. I don't believe I am arrogant, cold or unfriendly."

(Continued on Page 2)

He won... he lost

Dennis Holly Johnny Walker

Who's who at CCB —some top students

See page 8

Baltimore Afro-American
WE ARE NOW IN OUR 88TH YEAR
88th Year No. 70
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Vote registration drive blocked

Brailey quits caucus, charges legislators not for the people

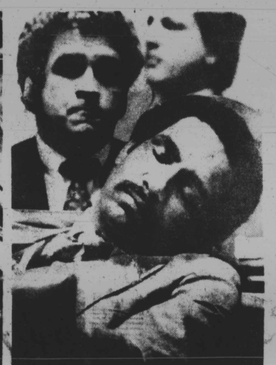
Delegate Troy Brailey, D-40th, this week resigned from the Maryland General Assembly black legislative caucus in protest of what he termed the tendency of some black elected officials to pursue their own narrow interests rather than fight for the needs and aspirations of the people, "especially the poor and blacks."

The veteran lawmaker coupled his resignation with a request that Gov. Harry R. Hughes veto a measure passed in both houses of the Assembly which extends credit interest rates to 18 percent. Brailey was the sole black legislator to oppose this law which he say "will hurt black people."

In a letter to Sen. Robert L. Douglass, chairman of the legislative black caucus, dated April 8, Brailey said "I believed I can do more for the black community by working through some of the other organizations that I am affiliated with that are more people oriented.

(Continued on Page 2)

Sleepy time in Annapolis



THE RIGORS OF LAWMAKING — It's apparently very tiring being a Maryland legislator. Delegate Joseph E. Owens, D-Montgomery County, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, seems to be sleepy after finishing defending a bill his committee introduced that would call for suspension of driver's licenses for teenagers caught in violation of state drinking laws. The bill passed in the final hours of the legislative session Monday, April 7. In the photo at right, Sen. Clarence M. Mitchell III, D-Baltimore City, seems to be taking advantage of a lull in debate as the 1980 Maryland General Assembly comes to an end. Sen. Thomas V. Mike Miller, D-Prince George's County, is seated behind.

NAACP charges city election board stalled black voter sign-up

By Portia E. Badham
AFRO Staff Writer

Bureaucratic bumbling by the city's Board of Elections Supervisors may have foiled the attempts of the Baltimore Branch NAACP to register 5,000 people for the presidential primary May 13.

The Baltimore NAACP, recognized as one of the leaders in voter registration in Baltimore, sought more than 5,000 mail-in registration forms from the Board of Elections Supervisors in March for its voter registration kick-off March 25.

However, according to Barbara Cooper, NAACP program coordinator, the civil rights group learned that the supply was low and the group was given 500 forms with a promise that the additional 4,500 would be delivered once the order came in.

Concerned about the Monday, April 14 deadline, Mrs. Cooper called the election offices Thursday morning and was told that the forms would not be in until Monday.

However, later Thursday morning when she went to the office with the Rev. Douglass Miles, pastor of Brown Memorial Church and chairman of the NAACP's political action committee, she learned that the order had just been received.

Betty Blaney, deputy administrator at the elections headquarters, stated that an order for 75,000 forms was placed through the city's purchasing department in August 1979 and by November 30,000 forms had been received.

Mrs. Blaney stated that the printer contracted by the city purchasing agent was the cause for the delay. "This is very rare. We've had bad service with this printer but not to this extent."

However, the Rev. Miles stated, "When you want to cut off your black voting power to 40 percent, you have to do everything you can."

Black registered voters in Baltimore are estimated by several political observers at 55 percent. However, thousands of black voters are purged from the lists after each election, if they have not voted in five years.

Following the 1978 elections, more than 58,000 voters were purged from the lists. The Baltimore NAACP was able to register 25,000 of those who were dropped from the lists.

Baptist regional confab to honor Bertha Winston

By Elizabeth M. Oliver,
City Editor

Some 500 persons from the Eastern Seaboard are present here in Baltimore for the New England Baptist Youth Conference and Work Shop. The sessions at the Holiday Inn-Moravia, 6510 Frankford Ave., extend from today (Friday) through Sunday.

Highlight of the various banquets and affairs is the Saturday noon luncheon at the Holiday Inn - Moravia for Mrs. Bertha C. Winston.

During the event which is chaired by Mrs. Bettye S. Graves, Mrs. Winston will receive the pewter tray, Mayor Schaefer's highest award and an AFRO citation.

Mrs. Winston, one of the city's

Continued on page 26

Banking commissioner resigns after black bank deal probe

This week's resignation by State Banking Commissioner W.H. Holden Gibbs who recently signed a charter for the black-owned Harbor Bank of Maryland will not affect the bank's future

Gibbs resigned following charges that he approved the bank's charter return and legislative passage of a bill raising bank interest rates.

He quit his job Wednesday, saying a new banking commissioner was needed to restore the integrity of the office. State officials report that the resignation was voluntary.

Gibbs signed the charter for the State Banking Commission March 31, the same day several members of the Black Caucus changed their votes in favor of a Senate bill to raise interest rates to 18 percent.

State Licensing and Regulation Secretary John Corbley conducted an inquiry following Gov. Harry Hughes' suggestion that an investigation be made.

Corbley said the black legislators, Delegates Walter Dean, Howard P. Rawlings and Hattie Harrison, who met with Gibbs, denied any connection between their support of the banking interest bill and the approval of the Harbor Bank charter.

"Mr. Gibbs voluntarily resigned effective immediately," said Corbley. "I cannot find any affirmative evidence that there was a connection between the issuance of the charter and the passage of the bill. If such a tning happened, it hasn't come to my attention through any valid proof."

Charles R. Georgius, deputy banking commissioner, will assume the position until Corbley's new commissioner is appointed. The Banking Commission is appointed by Gorbley with the approval of the governor.

(Continued on Page 2)

1ST CONTEST OF SPRING!

Your mom could be AFRO mother of year

What is a mother? She can be many things. That first breath of warmth we feel, that first tender touch of affection.

She is the one who gives us our sense of direction in life, guiding our footsteps in the paths which she hopes will be best for us.

A mother nurtures our physical needs, nurses our emotional hurts. She gives us comfort when it is needed, discipline when it is required, praise when it is warranted.

A mother gives us the ear that listens, the hand that soothes, the arms that protect, the voice that encourages us to do our best and the heart that loves us always.

A mother gives herself — not just for a brief span of time but forever — as long as she is 'Mother.'

The AFRO-AMERICAN is sponsoring a local 'Mother of the Year Contest.' This is your chance to tell us what your mother means to you and to make her 'Mother of the Year - 1980.'

If your mother is a winner she will receive many prizes. Among them will be : a gift certificate from the In Outlet, 4 tickets to the Arena Player's production of "The Amorous Flea," dinner for two at the Ritz, dinner for two at Pat D' Joint on Liberty Road, flowers and several other prizes.

Hurry! See details in the Our World Section and make your mom a winner.

Swisher says no charges pending on cop who shot McGee in back

States Attorney William Swisher, himself recently acquitted on political corruption, has said no criminal charges will be filed against Detective Steve McCown, 32, who shot Ja-Wan McGee in the back March 20.

McCown, however, is still assigned to administrative duties since the shooting pending the outcome of the police investigation.

A police department spokesman has said McCown would not be assigned to public duty until the departmental investigation is concluded.

McCown shot McGee in BJ's Carry Out pizza shop on Erdman Avenue because he thought the youth was drawing a pistol. McGee actually was holding a silver cigarette lighter. The bullet grazed the youth's spine and doctors say he may be paralyzed from the chest down for life.

Swisher called the incident "sad and unfortunate" and said McCown acted under a mistaken belief that a robbery was about to occur and therefore lacked the criminal intent which is necessary to prosecute such a case under the laws of this state.

In conducting the investigation, prosecutors and investigators personally interviewed civilian witnesses, police officers and McCown. McGee was also interviewed in the presence of his family and gave a tape recorded statement to an investigating prosecutor.

Richard Cremin, attorney for McCown stated "Knowing he was under criminal investigation put intense pressure on McCown. Obviously, the fact that he was exonerated from any criminal liability was a relief."

McGee's parents have filed a $15 million civil suit against the officer and the City of Baltimore. Randolph King and Constance McGee filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court on behalf of their son, against Baltimore Police Commissioner Donald Pomerleau, Mayor William Schaefer and the City Council.

Delegate Troy Brailey had asked Mayor Schaefer to investigate the shooting of McGee. In a letter sent to Brailey on April 3, Mayor Schaefer stated; "I understand that a comprehensive investigation is presently being conducted by the State's Attorney's office in cooperation with the police department. I am confident that the investigation will be conducted in a conscientious and thorough manner.

"There are no words that can truly express the sorrow that has been caused by this unfortunate incident. I understand your concerns and appreciate your expressing them to me."

'Enough is enough' Teddy K tells Maryland Democrats

By Paul Evans
Special to the AFRO

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, presidential candidate and American liberalism's chief drum major, promised here Wednesday evening that state Democrats would send President Carter a message "that enough is enough" when they cast ballots in the May 13 primary election.

Thrilling the crowd of about 400 in the city's Convention Center with his characteristic Yankee accent, time and time again, the Massachusetts Democrat declared that "compassion is not out of style."

Speaking slowly to draw out his words for emphasis, he said that the president's domestic and foreign policy had been a "surprise policy," which the senator hoped to turn into a surprise for Carter on Primary Day.

The 48-year-old senator recited the usual Democratic litany of support for the aspirations and needs of the elderly, the poor, and the unemployed, concerns he felt that were not outdated in the 1980s.

During the 10-minute address, which was the central event of a nearly day-long visit to Baltimore, Kennedy said that President Carter should emerge from the White House and get out and debate the real issues. He likened Carter's policies to the tactics of Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon, both Republicans, which didn't work, Kennedy claimed.

(Continued on Page 2)

Sen. Ted Kennedy