NATIONAL

State to Weigh Punishment of Teacher in "Buckwheat" Case

CENTRAL FALLS, R.I. (AP) — A state education official said that he will decide whether to punish a Central Falls teacher who allegedly directed a black student to dress up as Buckwheat.

Frank Pontarelli, director of administration and finance for the State Department of Education, said the case is heading to his desk following an appeal of Superintendent Maureen Chevrette's ruling on the matter.

Pontarelli would not discuss Chevrette's decision, saying the teacher at the center of the case, Kevin Ornazian, has asked for a closed hearing.

Pontarelli is acting as special state administrator for the district. He said he will consider Ornazian's appeal at a closed-door hearing Dec. 9.

Ornazian allegedly told an unidentified black high school senior to pose as Buckwheat, the young black boy in the 1930s television series "The Little Rascals."

The teacher allegedly made the request as part of the school's Spirit Week. One of the week's activities is Auction Day, in which teachers pay seniors to perform chores. The money goes to the senior fund for events such as the prom.

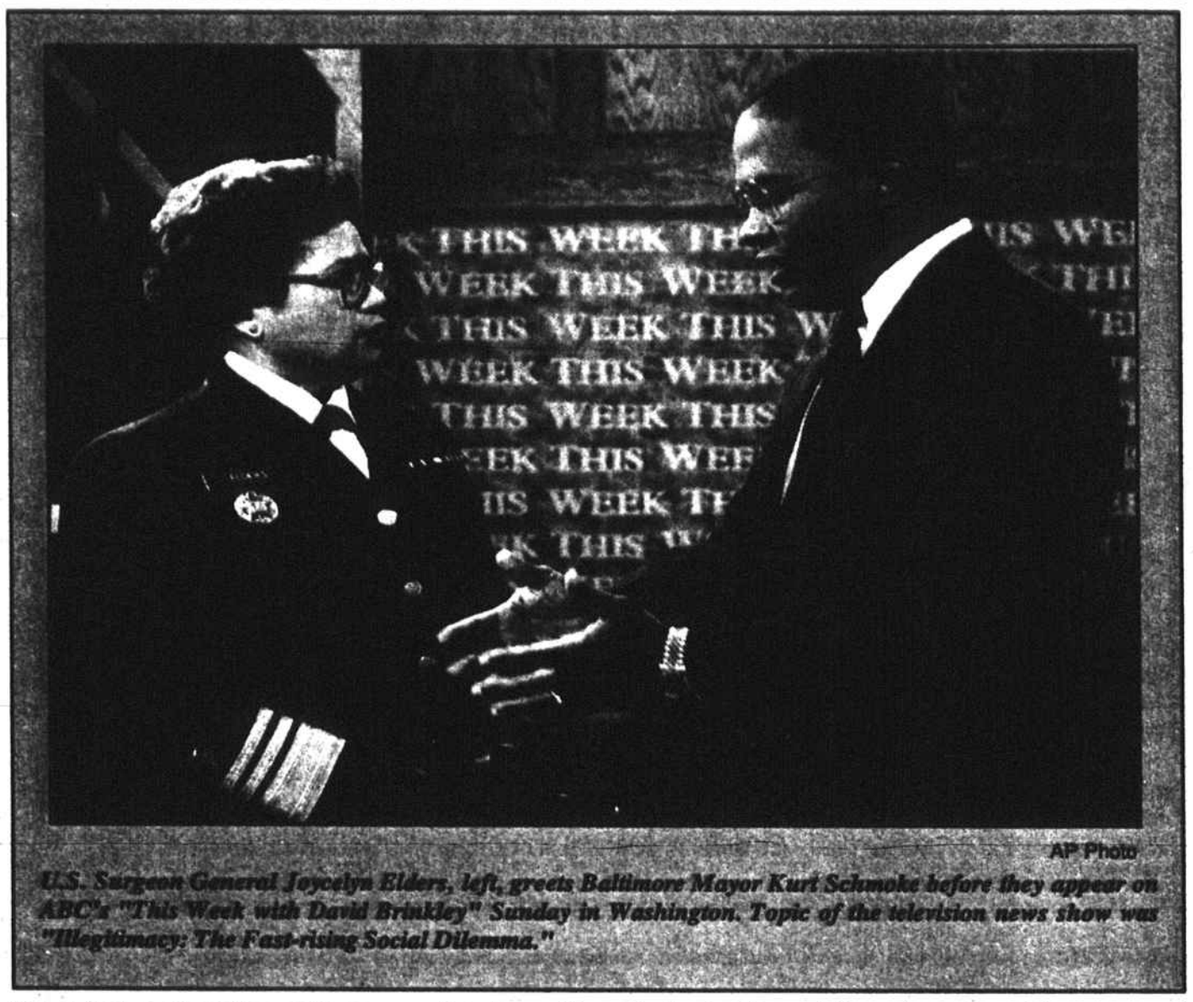
The Providence Journal reported the student paraded through the school cafeteria with a serving tray covered with cotton balls and condoms, calling, "Where's the back of the bus?"

Ornazian, head of the industrial arts department at Central Falls Junior-Senior High School, was suspended with pay Nov. 5.

If Ornazian is dissatisfied with Pontarelli's decision, he can take the matter to Education Commissioner Peter McWalters, Pontarelli said.

Disciplinary action against a teacher can take the form of suspension or revocation of his teaching certificate, said Forrest Avila, legal counsel for the state Department of Education.

Pontarelli's decision will be made public at a Central Falls School Advisory Council meeting Dec. 13.



AP Photo

U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, left, greets Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke before they appear on ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley" Sunday in Washington. Topic of the television news show was "Illegitimacy: The Fast-rising Social Dilemma."

Defendant's Lawyer in Jordan Murder Raps Prosecutor's Handling of Evidence

LUMBERTON (AP) — Lawyers for one of the two Robeson County men accused of killing James Jordan have filed a motion in court assailing the local prosecutors for the way they've handled the evidence in the case.

Attorneys for Larry Martin Demery filed the motion last week in Superior Court, requesting an order to compel the prosecution to produce all evidence against their client, as required by law.

Attorneys Hugh Rogers and John Campbell complained in their motion that, to date, they have received 103 copies of "unidentified, unlabeled photographs, and a portion of the defendant's alleged statement."

"The State has either failed to attempt to obtain these materials from the law enforcement agencies who have such items," the attorneys said. "If the State has obtained these items, it has failed to provide same to defendant."

Demery was arrested Aug. 15 with co-defendant Daniel Andre Green for the July 23 murder of James Jordan, the father of former basketball superstar Michael Jordan. James Jordan's body was found in a South Carolina creek.

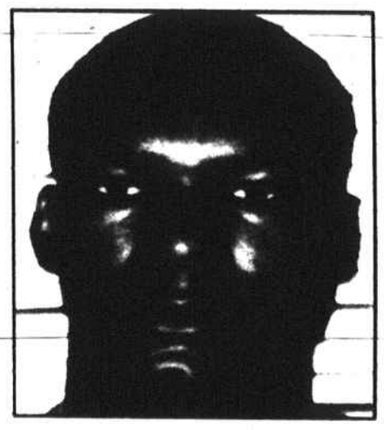
District Attorney Richard Townsend has said he will seek the death penalty.

The defense filed motions to review the evidence in September. A hearing was set for Oct. 5, but Townsend asked for and received a 30-day extension.

Rogers and Campbell also complained that investigators have released selected information to the media without furnishing the same information to them. They requested an immediate hearing. It was not clear when the judge will rule on the motion.

Demery and Green have been held in the Robeson County Jail without bond since their arrest.

Larry Demery

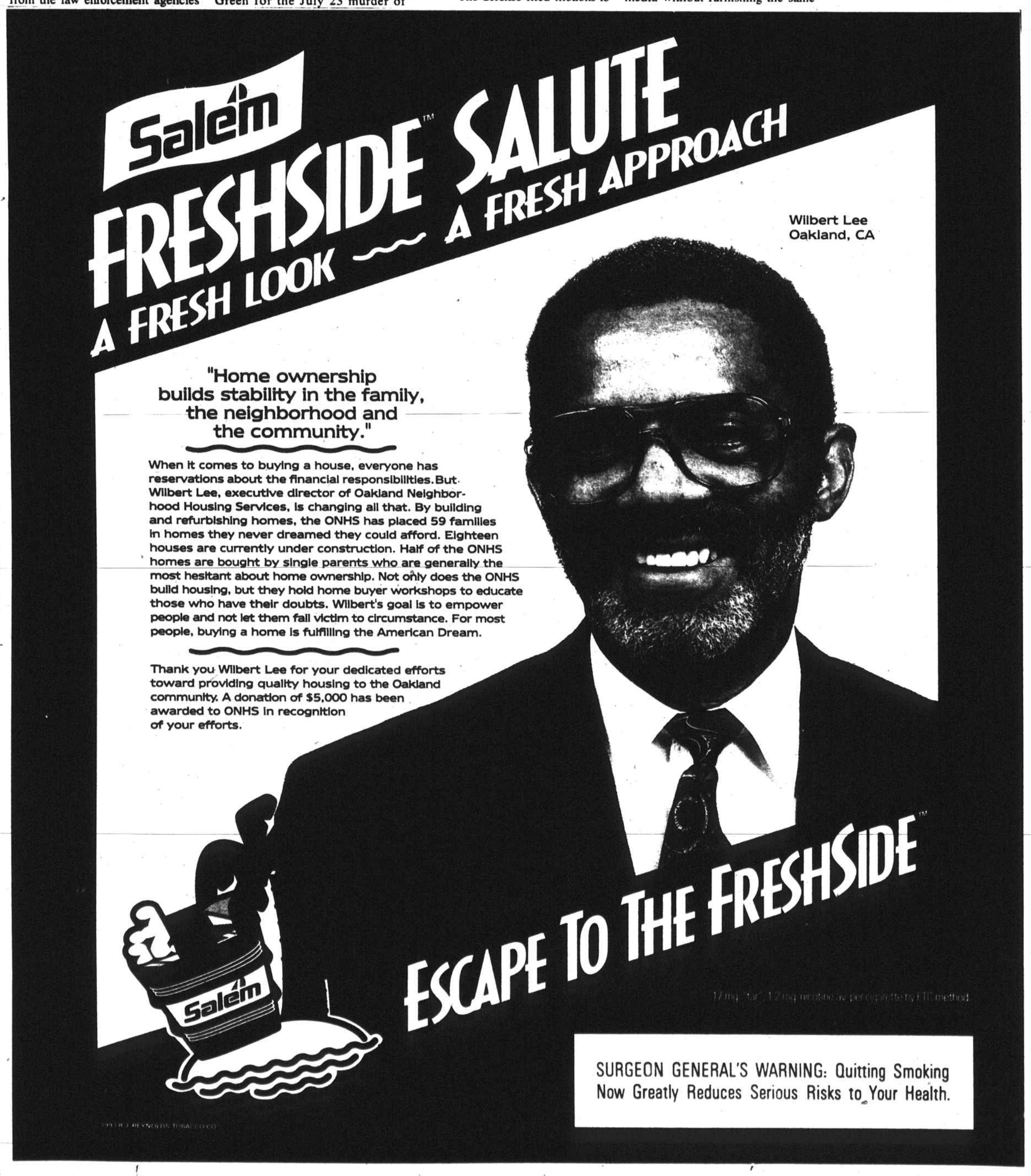


Daniel Green

Dye Voted To N.Y. Supreme Court

Winston-Salem native Luther Dye has won a seat on the state Supreme Court in Queens, N.Y.

Dye is a 1950 graduate of Atkins High School. He graduated from N.C. A&T State University in 1955.

Dye, 60, has been a Civil Court judge and has served four years on the Criminal Court bench. He was also an Associate Counsel with New York Life Insurance Co. for 12 years, specializing in Housing Law and Nursing Home issues. He is an active member of the Guy R. Brewer United Democratic Club.

Supreme Court justices in New York earn an annual of $99,000 and the salary is slated to rise to $113,000 in October.